

Wilderness Biographies

Who receives credit for preserving wilderness? Countless individuals contributed to the development of the wilderness preservation movement in the United States. Following are brief biographies of a few people who were instrumental in the ultimate preservation of wilderness areas through congressional designation. This selection is by no means comprehensive. If all of the strong voices that advocated for the protection of wild lands were included here, this section would be unwieldy. These biographies serve as a starting point. The last pages broaden the horizon of wilderness visionaries by listing people who contributed to the wilderness concept or who influenced regional wilderness preservation.

The life, work, and passion of the following people can inspire our own work in wilderness education. We stand on the shoulders of many giants who laid a strong foundation for preservation. Incorporate the words and actions of these people in your programs and search for the strong voices that influenced the preservation of wilderness in your area.



Aldo Leopold (1887-1948)

“The richest values of wilderness lie not in the days of Daniel Boone nor even in the present, but rather in the future.”

—Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949

“Our remnants of wilderness will yield bigger values to the nation’s character and health than they will to its pocketbook, and to destroy them will be to admit that the latter are the only values that interest us.”

—Aldo Leopold, *A Plea for Wilderness Hunting Grounds*, 1925

Aldo Leopold advocated for the vision of a national system of wilderness as a government employee in the U.S. Forest Service, in his life work, and in his writings. In the early 1920s, Leopold began proposing the preservation of wilderness areas in the most permanent way possible. At that time, America already had two land management agencies, the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, whose missions were nature preservation and conservation. Yet, Leopold realized that in preserving the quality of wilderness, both agencies were flawed. Both allowed development in one form or another.

Leopold began working within the U.S. Forest Service to provide for a greater level of protection of primitive wilderness areas. His voice is responsible for the first Forest Service wilderness area, in the Gila National Forest, New Mexico in 1924. Even with the Gila Primitive Area designated administratively as wilderness, Leopold stated: “Let no man think that because a few foresters have tentatively formulated a wilderness policy that the preservation of . . . wilderness is assured . . .” He continued to advocate congressional protection of wilderness. Through his writings, Leopold substantiated the wilderness cause with scientific observations and research.

Growing up in the Midwest, Leopold spent much of his childhood exploring the outdoors and recording his observations about nature. His skills of observation and description led him to combine his passions and his work throughout his life as a forester and writer. In 1935, the same year he helped to establish The Wilderness Society with Bob Marshall and others, Leopold started to invest his time, energy, and philosophy of land management into restoring a piece of worn out farmland in northern Wisconsin. His observations of that piece of land were published as part of a collection of essays in a book, *A Sand County Almanac*, published posthumously in 1949.

Beyond his descriptions of the natural world, Leopold articulated an innovative idea known as the “land ethic.” It was a new way of thinking and acting toward the land in the mid-1900s. “When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and

respect. There is no other way for land to survive the impact of mechanized man, . . . That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics." Leopold's writings are a lasting inspiration to those challenging the priority of industry and so-called "development" with a sense of humility and ecological conscience.

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Wilderness is the raw material out of which man has hammered the artifact called civilization.

Wilderness was never a homogenous raw material. It was very diverse, and the resulting artifacts are very diverse. These differences in the end product are known as cultures. The rich diversity of the world's cultures reflects a corresponding diversity in the wilds that gave them birth.

For the first time in the history of the human species, two changes are now impending. One is the exhaustion of wilderness in the more habitable portions of the globe. The other is the world-wide hybridization of cultures through modern transport and industrialization. Neither can be prevented, and perhaps should not be, but the question arises whether, by some slight amelioration of the impending changes, certain values can be preserved that would otherwise be lost.

To the laborer in the sweat of his labor, the raw stuff on his anvil is an adversary to be conquered. So was wilderness an adversary to the pioneer.

But to the laborer in repose, able for the moment to cast a philosophical eye on his world, that same raw stuff is something to be loved and cherished, because it gives definition and meaning to his life. This is the plea for the preservation of some tag-ends of wilderness, as museum pieces, for the edification of those who may one day wish to see, feel, or study the origins of their cultural inheritance.

The Remnants

Many of the diverse wildernesses out of which we have hammered America are already gone; hence in any practical program the unit areas to be preserved must vary greatly in size and in degree of wildness.

No living man will see again the long-grass prairie, where a sea of prairie flowers lapped at the stirrups of the pioneer. We shall do well to find a forty here and there on which the prairie plants can be kept alive as species. There were a hundred such plants, many of exceptional beauty. Most of them are quite unknown to those who have inherited their domain.

But the short-grass prairie, where Cabeza de Vaca saw the horizon under the bellies of the buffalo, is still extant in a few spots of 10,000-acres size, albeit severely chewed up by sheep, cattle, and dry-farmers. If the forty-niners are worth commemorating on the walls of state capitols, is not the scene of their mighty hegira worth commemorating in several national prairie reservations?

Of the coastal prairie there is one block in Florida, and one in Texas, but oil wells, onion fields, and citrus groves are closing in, armed to the teeth with drill and bulldozers. It is last call.

No living man will see again the virgin pineries of the Lake States, or the flatwoods of the coastal plain, or the giant hardwoods; of these samples of a few acres each will have to suffice. But there are still several blocks of maple-hemlock of thousand-acre size; there are similar blocks of Appalachian hardwoods, of southern hardwood swamp, of cypress swamp, and of Adirondack spruce. Few of these tag-ends are secure from prospective cuttings, and fewer still from prospective tourist roads.

One of the fastest-shrinking categories of wilderness is coastlines. Cottages and tourist roads have all but annihilated wild coasts on both oceans, and Lake Superior is now losing the last large remnant of wild shoreline on the Great Lakes. No single kind of wilderness is more intimately interwoven with history, and none nearer the point of complete disappearance.

In all North America east of the Rockies, there is only one large area formally reserved as a wilderness: the Quetico-Superior International Park in Minnesota and Ontario. This magnificent block of canoe-country, a mosaic of lakes and rivers, lies mostly in Canada and can be about as large as Canada chooses to make it, but its integrity is threatened by two recent developments: the growth of fishing resorts served by pontoon equipped airplanes, and a jurisdictional dispute whether the Minnesota end of the area shall be all National Forest, or partly State Forest. The whole region is in danger of power impoundments, and this regrettable cleavage among proponents of wilderness may end in giving power the whip-hand.

In the Rocky Mountain states, a score of areas in the National Forests, varying in size from a hundred thousand to half a million acres, are withdrawn as wilderness, and closed to roads, hotels, and other inimical uses. In the National Parks the same principle is recognized, but no specific boundaries are delimited. Collectively, these federal areas are the backbone of the wilderness program, but they are not so secure as the paper record may lead one to believe. Local pressures for new tourist roads knock off a chip here and a slab there. There is perennial pressure for extension of roads for forest-fire control, and these, by slow degrees, become public highways. Idle CCC camps presented a wide spread temptation to build new and often needless roads. Lumber shortages during the war gave impetus of military necessity to many road extensions, legitimate and otherwise. At the present moment, ski-tows and ski-hotels are being promoted in many mountain areas, often without regard to their prior designation as wilderness.

One of the most insidious invasions of wilderness is via predator control. It works thus: wolves and lions are cleaned out of a wilderness area in the interests of big-game management. The big-game herds (usually deer or elk) then increase to the point of over browsing the range. Hunters must then be encouraged to harvest the surplus, but modern hunters refuse to operate far from a car; hence a road must be built to provide access to the surplus game. Again and again, wilderness areas have been split by this process, but it still continues.

The Rocky Mountain system of wilderness areas covers a wide gamut of forest types, from the juniper breaks of the Southwest to the 'illimitable woods where rolls the Oregon.' It is lacking, however, in desert areas, probably because of that under-aged brand of esthetics which limits the definition of 'scenery' to lakes and pine trees.

In Canada and Alaska there are still large expanses of virgin country

Where nameless men by the nameless rivers wander and in strange valleys die strange deaths alone.

A representative series of these areas can, and should, be kept. Many are of negligible or negative value for economic use. It will be contended, of course, that no deliberate planning to this end is necessary; that adequate areas will survive anyhow. All recent history belies so comforting an assumption. Even if wild spots do survive, what of the fauna? The woodland

caribou, the several races of mountain sheep, the pure form of woods buffalo, the barren ground grizzly, the freshwater seals, and the whales are even now threatened. Of what use are wild areas destitute of their distinctive faunas? The recently organized Arctic Institute has embarked on the industrialization of the Arctic wastes, with excellent chances of enough success to ruin them as wilderness. It is last call, even in the Far North.

To what extent Canada and Alaska will be able to see and grasp their opportunities is anybody's guess. Pioneers usually scoff at any effort to perpetuate pioneering.

Wilderness for Recreation

Physical combat for means of subsistence was, for unnumbered centuries, an economic fact. When it disappeared as such, a sound instinct led us to preserve it in the form of athletic sports and games.

Physical combat between men and beasts was, in like manner, an economic fact, now preserved as hunting and fishing for sport.

Public wilderness areas are, first of all, a means of perpetuating, in sport form, the more virile and primitive skills in pioneering travel and subsistence.

Some of these skills are of generalized distribution; the details have been adapted to the American scene, but the skill is world-wide. Hunting, fishing, and foot travel by pack are examples.

Two of them, however, are as American as a hickory tree; they have been copied elsewhere, but they were developed to their full perfection only on this continent. One of these is canoe travel, and the other is travel by pack-train. Both are shrinking rapidly. Your Hudson Bay Indian now has a put-put, and your mountaineer a Ford. If I had made a living by canoe or by packhorse, I should likely do likewise, for both are grueling labor. But we who seek wilderness travel for sport are foiled when we are forced to compete with mechanized substitutes. It is footless to execute a portage to the tune of motor launches, or to turn out your bellmare in the pasture of a summer hotel. It is better to stay home.

Wilderness areas are first of all a series of sanctuaries for the primitive arts of wilderness travel, especially canoeing and packing.

I suppose some will wish to debate whether it is important to keep these primitive arts alive. I shall not debate it. Either you know it in your bones, or you are very, very, old.

European hunting and fishing are largely devoid of the thing that wilderness areas might be the means of preserving in this country. Europeans do not camp, cook, or do their own work in the woods if they can avoid doing so. Work chores are delegated to beaters and servants, and a hunt carries the atmosphere of a picnic, rather than of pioneering. The test of skill is confined largely to the actual taking of game or fish.

There are those who decry wilderness sport as 'undemocratic' because the recreational carrying capacity of wilderness is small, as compared with a golf links or a tourist camp. The basic error in such an argument is that it applies the philosophy of mass-production to what is intended to counteract mass-production. The value of recreation is not a matter of ciphers. Recreation is valuable in proportion to the intensity of its experiences, and to the degree to which it *differs from* and *contrasts with* workaday life. By these criteria, mechanized outings are at best a milk-and-water affair.

Mechanized recreation already has seized nine-tenths of the woods and mountains; a decent respect for minorities should dedicate the other tenth to wilderness.

Wilderness for Science

The most important characteristic of an organism is that capacity for eternal self-renewal known as health.

There are two organisms whose process of self-renewal have been subjected to human interference and control. One of these is man himself (medicine and public health). The other is land (agriculture and conservation).

The effort to control the health of land has not been very successful. It is now generally understood that when soil loses fertility, or washes away faster than it forms, and when water systems exhibit abnormal floods and shortages, the land is sick.

Other derangements are known as facts, but are not yet thought of as symptoms of land sickness. The disappearance of plants and animal species without visible cause, despite efforts to protect them, and the irruption of others as pests despite efforts to control them, must, in the absence of simpler explanations, be regarded as symptoms of sickness in the land organism. Both are occurring too frequently to be dismissed as normal evolutionary events.

The status of thought on these ailments of the land is reflected in the fact that our treatments for them are still prevailingly local. Thus when a soil loses fertility we pour on fertilizer, or at best alter its tame flora and fauna, without considering the fact that its wild flora and fauna, which built the soil to begin with, may likewise be important to its maintenance. It was recently discovered, for example, that good tobacco crops depend, for some unknown reason, on the preconditioning of the soil by wild ragweed. It does not occur to us that such unexpected chains of dependency may have wide prevalence in nature.

When prairie dogs, ground squirrels, or mice increase to pest levels we poison them, but we do not look beyond the animal to find the cause of the irruption. We assume that animal troubles must have animal causes. The latest scientific evidence points to derangements of the *plant* community as the real seat of rodent irruptions, but few explorations of this clue are being made.

Many forest plantations are producing one-log or two-log trees on soil which originally grew three-log and four-log trees. Why? Thinking foresters know that the cause probably lies not in the tree, but in the micro-flora of the soil, and that it may take more years to restore the soil flora than it took to destroy it.

Many conservation treatments are obviously superficial. Flood-control dams have no relation to the cause of floods. Check dams and terraces do not touch the cause of erosion. Refuges and hatcheries to maintain the supply of game and fish do not explain why the supply fails to maintain itself.

In general, the trend of the evidence indicates that in land, just as in the human body, the symptoms may lie in one organ and the cause in another. The practices we now call conservation are, to a large extent, local alleviations of biotic pain. They are necessary, but they must not be confused with cures. The art of land doctoring is being practiced with vigor, but the science of land health is yet to be born.

A science of land health needs, first of all, a base datum of normality, a picture of how healthy land maintains itself as an organism.

We have two available norms. One is found where land physiology remains largely normal despite centuries of human occupation. I know of only one such place: north-eastern Europe. It is not likely that we shall fail to study it.

The other and most perfect norm is wilderness. Paleontology offers abundant evidence that wilderness maintained itself for immensely long-periods; that its component species were rarely lost, neither did they get out of hand; that weather and water built soil faster than it was carried away. Wilderness, then, assumes unexpected importance as a laboratory for the study of land-health.

One cannot study the physiology of Montana in the Amazon; each biotic province needs its own wilderness for comparative studies of used and unused land. It is of course too late to salvage more than a lopsided system of wilderness study areas, and most of these remnants are far too small to retain their normality in all respects. Even the National Parks, which run up to a million acres each in size, have not been large enough to retain their natural predators, or to exclude animal diseases carried by livestock. Thus the Yellowstone has lost its wolves and cougars, with the result that elk are ruining flora, particularly on the winter range. At the same time the grizzly bear and the mountain sheep are shrinking, the latter by reason of disease.

While even the largest wilderness areas become partially deranged, it required only a few wild acres for J.E. Weaver to discover why the prairie flora is more drouth-resistant than the agronomic flora which has supplanted it. Weaver found that the prairie species practice 'team work' underground by distributing their root systems to cover all levels whereas the species comprising the agronomic rotation over draw one level and neglect another, thus building up cumulative deficits. An important agronomic principle emerged from Weaver's researches.

Again, it required only a few acres for Togrediak to discover why pines on old fields never achieve the size or wild firmness of pines on uncleared forest soils. In the later case, the roots follow old root channels, and thus strike deeper.

In many cases we literally do not know how good a performance to expect of healthy land unless we have a wild area for comparison with sick ones. Thus, most of the early travelers to the Southwest describe the mountain rivers as originally clear, but a doubt remains, for they may, by accident, have seen them at favorable seasons. Erosion engineers had no base datum until it was discovered that exactly similar rivers in the Sierra Madre of Chihuahua, never grazed or used for fear of Indians, show at their worst a milky hue, not too cloudy for a trout fly. Moss grows to the water's edge on their banks. Most of the corresponding rivers in Arizona and New Mexico are ribbons of boulders, mossless, soil-less, and all but treeless. The preservation and study of the Sierra Madre wilderness, by an international experiment station, as a norm for the cure of sick land on both sides of the border, would be a good neighbor enterprise well worthy of consideration.

In short all available wild areas, large or small, are likely to have value as norms for land science. Recreation is not their only, or even their principle utility.

Wilderness for Wildlife

The National Parks do not suffice as a means of perpetuating the larger carnivores; witness the precarious status of the grizzly bear, and the fact that the park system is already wolfless. Neither do they suffice for mountain sheep; most sheep herds are shrinking.

The reasons for this are clear in some cases and obscure in others. The parks are certainly too small for such farranging species such as the wolf. Many animal species, for reasons unknown, do not seem to thrive as detached islands of population.

The most feasible way to enlarge the area available for wilderness fauna is for the wilder parts of the National Forests, which usually surround the Parks, to function as parks in respect of threatened species. That they have not so functioned is tragically illustrated in the case of the grizzly bear.

In 1909, when I first saw the West, there were grizzlies in ever major mountain mass, but you could travel for months without meeting a conservation officer. Today there is some kind of conservation officer 'behind every bush,' yet as wildlife bureaus grow, our most magnificent mammal retreats steadily toward the Canadian border. Of the 6000 grizzlies officially reported as remaining in the areas owned by the United States, 5000 are in Alaska. Only five states have any at all. There seems to be a tacit assumption that if grizzlies survive in Canada and Alaska, that is good enough. It is not good enough for me. The Alaskan bears are a distinct species. Relegating grizzlies to Alaska is about like relegating happiness to heaven; one may never get there.

Saving the grizzly requires a series of large areas from which roads and livestock are excluded, or in which livestock damage is compensated. Buying out scattered livestock ranches is the only way to create such areas, but despite large authority to buy and exchange lands, the conservation bureaus have accomplished virtually nothing toward this end. The Forest Service, I am told, has established one grizzly range in Montana, but I know of a mountain range in Utah in which the Forest Service actually promoted a sheep industry, despite the fact that it harbored the sole remnant of grizzlies in that state.

Permanent grizzly ranges and permanent wilderness areas are of course two names for one problem. Enthusiasm about either requires a long view of conservation, and a historical perspective. Only those able to see the pageant of evolution can be expected to value its theater, the wilderness, or its outstanding achievement, the grizzly. But if education really educates, there will, in time, be more and more citizens who understand that relics of the old West add meaning and value to the new. Youth yet unborn will pole up the Missouri with Lewis and Clark, or climb the Sierras with James Capen Adams, and each generation in turn will ask: Where is the big white bear? It will be a sorry answer to say he went under while conservationists weren't looking.

Defenders of Wilderness

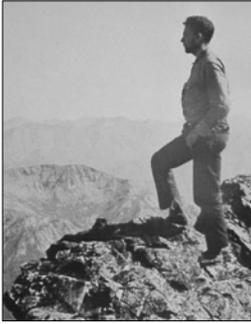
Wilderness is a resource which can shrink but not grow. Invasions can be arrested or modified in a manner to keep an area usable either for recreation, or for science, or for wildlife, but creation of new wilderness in the full sense of the word is impossible.

It follows, then, that any wilderness program is a rearguard action, through which retreats are reduced to a minimum. The Wilderness Society was organized in 1935 'for the purpose of saving the wilderness remnants in America.'

It does not suffice, however, to have such a society. Unless there be wilderness-minded men scattered through all the conservation bureaus, the society may never learn of new invasions until the time for action has passed. Furthermore a militant minority of wilderness-minded citizens must be on watch throughout the nation, and available for action in a pinch.

In Europe, where wilderness has now retreated to the Carpathians and Siberia, every thinking conservationist bemoans its loss. Even in Britain, which has less room for land-luxuries than almost any other civilized country, there is a vigorous if belated movement for saving a few small spots of semi-wild land.

Ability to see the cultural value of wilderness boils down, in the last analysis, to a question of intellectual humility. The shallow-minded modern who has lost his rootage in the land assumes that he has already discovered what is important; it is such who prate of empires, political or economic, that will last a thousand years. It is only the scholar who appreciates that all history consists of successive excursions from a single starting point, to which man returns again and again to organize yet another search for a durable scale of values. It is only the scholar who understands why the raw wilderness gives definition and meaning to the human enterprise.



Bob Marshall (1901-1939)

“In order to escape the whims of politics . . . [wilderness’ areas] . . . should be set aside by act of congress, just as national parks are today set aside. This would give them as close an approximation to permanence as could be realized in a world of shifting desires.”

—Bob Marshall, “Suggested Program for
Preservation of Wilderness Areas”
Memorandum to Secretary Ickes, 1934

Bob Marshall was a voracious outdoorsman. The sheer magnitude of miles he tramped, peaks he climbed, and little known regions he explored constitutes great accomplishment. However, his drive and passion to preserve the opportunity for these experiences for all people moved him to organize the forces necessary for the preservation of wild lands.

Marshall’s wilderness passion and government savvy were influenced by his father, Louis Marshall. As a delegate to New York state constitutional conventions in the 1890s, Louis was instrumental in developing and then defending language in the state constitution to protect and preserve state-owned forest preserve lands in New York’s Adirondack and Catskill state parks to “be forever kept as wild forest lands.” While the federal legislation passed by the U.S. Congress 70 years later to protect public land as wilderness was very different, and did not include New York State wilderness areas, the seeds for protecting wilderness by statute were planted by the foresight of Bob’s father. Bob Marshall continued in his father’s steps through his work in federal government positions (the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs as chief forester) and through his strong voice as an outspoken conservationist and wilderness advocate.

The passion Marshall felt for the wild lands he explored inspired him to found The Wilderness Society, an organization formed to save America’s vanishing wilderness. Near the proposed Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina, Marshall and four others set in motion the creation of a society focused on wilderness preservation. A dynamic group of eight gathered in Washington, D.C., on January 3, 1935, for the initial organizing meeting of the Society. “All we desire to save from invasion is that extremely minor fraction of outdoor America which yet remains free from mechanical sights and sounds and smell.” Marshall’s energy, efforts, and financial backing helped launch the new organization. The sudden death of Marshall in 1939 at age 38 was a shock, yet many individuals carried on in the example of Marshall’s tireless energy and spirit. Twenty-five years later, Americans realized his legacy with the passing of The Wilderness Act. Marshall’s extensive writings and his vision continue to inspire the wilderness movement now inherited by those who share his passion and devotion.

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Bob Marshall

I

It is appalling to reflect how much useless energy has been expended in arguments which would have been inconceivable had the terminology been defined. In order to avoid such futile controversy I shall undertake at the start to delimit the meaning of the principal term with which this paper is concerned. According to Dr. Johnson a *wilderness* is “a tract of solitude and savegeness,” a definition more poetic than explicit. Modern lexicographers do better with “a

tract of land, whether a forest or a wide barren plain, uncultivated and uninhabited by human beings.”¹ This definition gives a rather good foundation, but it still leaves a penumbra of partially shaded connotation.

For the ensuing discussion I shall use the word *wilderness* to denote a region which contains no permanent inhabitants, possesses no possibility of conveyance by any mechanical means and is sufficiently spacious that a person in crossing it must have the experience of sleeping out. The dominant attributes of such an area are: first, that it requires any one who exists in it to depend exclusively on his own effort for survival; and second, that it preserves as nearly as possible the primitive environment. This means that all roads, power transportation and settlements are barred. But trails, temporary shelters, which were common long before the advent of the white race, are entirely permissible.

When Columbus effected his immortal debarkation, he touched upon a wilderness which embraced virtually a hemisphere. The philosophy that progress is proportional to the amount of alteration imposed upon nature never seemed to have occurred to the Indians. Even such tribes as the Incas, Aztecs and Pueblos made few changes in the environment in which they were born. “The land and all that it bore they treated with consideration; not attempting to improve it, they never desecrated it.”² Consequently, over billions of acres the aboriginal wanderers still spun out their peripatetic careers, the wild animals still browsed in unmolested meadows and the forests still grew and moldered and grew again precisely as they had done for undeterminable centuries.

It was not until the settlement of Jamestown in 1607 that there appeared the germ for that unabated disruption of natural conditions which has characterized all subsequent American history. At first expansion was very slow. The most intrepid seldom advanced further from their neighbors than the next drainage. At the time of the Revolution the zone of civilization was still practically confined to a narrow belt lying between the Atlantic Ocean and the Appalachian valleys. But a quarter of a century later, when the Louisiana Purchase was consummated, the outposts of civilization had reached the Mississippi, and there were foci of colonization in half a dozen localities west of the Appalachians, though the unbroken line of the frontier was east of the mountains.³

It was yet possible as recently as 1804 and 1805 for the Lewis and Clark Expedition to cross two thirds of a continent without seeing any culture more advanced than that of the Middle Stone Age. The only routes of travel were the uncharted rivers and the almost impassable Indian trails. And continually the expedition was breaking upon some “truly magnificent and sublimely grand object, which has from the commencement of time been concealed from the view of civilized man.”⁴

This exploration inaugurated a century of constantly accelerating emigration such as the world had never known. Throughout this frenzied period the only serious thought ever devoted to the wilderness was how it might be demolished. To the pioneers pushing westward it was an enemy of diabolical cruelty and danger, standing as the great obstacle to industry and development. Since these seemed to constitute the essentials for felicity, the obvious step was to excoriate the devil which interfered. And so the path of empire proceeded to substitute for the undisturbed seclusion of nature the conquering accomplishments of man. Highways wound up valleys which had known only the footsteps of the wild animals; neatly planted gardens and orchards replaced the tangled confusion of the primeval forest; factories belched up great clouds of smoke where for centuries trees had transpired toward the sky, and the ground-cover of fresh sorrel and twinflower was transformed to asphalt spotted with chewing-gum, coal dust and gasoline.

To-day there remain less than twenty wilderness areas of a million acres, and annually even these shrunken remnants of an undefiled continent are being despoiled. Aldo Leopold has truly said:

“The day is almost upon us when canoe travel will consist in paddling up the noisy wake of a motor launch and portaging through the back yard of a summer cottage. When that day comes canoe travel will be dead, and dead too will be a part of our Americanism The day is almost upon us when a pack train must wind its way up a graveled highway and turn out its bell mare in the pasture of a summer hotel. When that day comes the pack train will be dead, the diamond hitch will be merely a rope and Kit Carson and Jim Bridger will be names in a history lesson.”⁵

Within the next few years the fate of the wilderness must be decided. This is a problem to be settled by deliberate rationality and not by personal prejudice. Fundamentally, the question is one of balancing the total happiness which will be obtainable if the few undesecrated areas are perpetuated against that which will prevail if they are destroyed. For this purpose it will be necessary: first, to consider the extra-ordinary benefits of the wilderness; second, to enumerate the drawbacks to undeveloped areas; third, to evaluate the relative importance of these conflicting factors, and finally, to formulate a plan of action.

II

The benefits which accrue from the wilderness may be separated into three broad divisions: the physical, the mental and the esthetic.

Most obvious in the first category is the contribution which the wilderness makes to health. This involves something more than pure air and quiet, which are also attainable in almost any rural situation. But toting a fifty-pound pack over an abominable trail, snowshoeing across a blizzard-swept plateau or scaling some jagged pinnacle which juts far above timber all develop a body distinguished by a soundness, stamina and élan unknown amid normal surroundings.

More than mere heartiness is the character of physical independence which can be nurtured only away from the coddling of civilization. In a true wilderness if a person is not qualified to satisfy all the requirements of existence, then he is bound to perish. As long as we prize individuality and competence it is imperative to provide the opportunity for complete self-sufficiency. This is inconceivable under the effete superstructure of urbanity; it demands the harsh environment of untrammelled expanses.

Closely allied is the longing for physical exploration which bursts through all the chains with which society fetters it. Thus we find Lindbergh, Amundsen, Byrd gaily daring the unknown, partly to increase knowledge, but largely to satisfy the craving for adventure. Adventure, whether physical or mental, implies breaking into unpenetrated ground, venturing beyond the boundary of normal aptitude, extending oneself to the limit of capacity, courageously facing peril. Life without the chance for such exertions would be for many persons a dreary game, scarcely bearable in its horrible banality.

It is true that certain people of great erudition “come inevitably to feel that if life has any value at all, then that value comes in thought,”⁶ and so they regard mere physical pleasures as puerile inconsequences. But there are others, perfectly capable of comprehending relativity and the quantum theory, who find equal ecstasy in non-intellectual adventure. It is entirely irrelevant which view-point is correct; each is applicable to whoever entertains it. The important consideration is that both groups are entitled to indulge their penchant, and in the second instance this is scarcely possible without the freedom of the wilderness.

III

One of the greatest advantages of the wilderness is its incentive to independent cogitation. This is partly a reflection of physical stimulation, but more inherently due to the fact that original ideas require an objectivity and perspective seldom possible in the distracting propinquity of one's fellow men. It is necessary to “have gone behind the world of humanity, seen its institutions like toadstools by the wayside.”⁷ This theorizing is justified empirically by the number of America's most virile minds, including Thomas Jefferson, Henry Thoreau, Louis

Agassiz, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, John Muir and William James, who have felt the compulsion of periodical retirements into the solitudes. Withdrawn from the contaminating notions of their neighbors, these thinkers have been able to meditate, unprejudiced by the immuring civilization.

Another mental value of an opposite sort is concerned not with incitement but with repose. In a civilization which requires most lives to be passed amid inordinate dissonance, pressure and intrusion, the chance of retiring now and then to the quietude and privacy of sylvan haunts becomes for some people a psychic necessity. It is only the possibility of convalescing in the wilderness which saves them from being destroyed by the terrible neural tension of modern existence.

There is also a psychological bearing of the wilderness which affects, in contrast to the minority who find it indispensable for relaxation, the whole of human kind. One of the most profound discoveries of psychology has been the demonstration of the terrific harm caused by suppressed desires. To most of mankind a very powerful desire is the appetite for adventure. But in an age of machinery only the extremely fortunate have any occasion to satiate this hankering, except vicariously. As a result people become so choked by the monotony of their lives that they are readily amenable to the suggestion of any lurid diversion. Especially in battle, they imagine, will be found the glorious romance of futile dreams. And so they endorse war with enthusiasm and march away to stirring music, only to find their adventure a chimera, and the whole world miserable. It is all tragically ridiculous, and yet there is a passion there which can not be dismissed with a contemptuous reference to childish quixotism. William James has said that "militarism is the great preserver of ideals of hardihood, and human life with no use for hardihood would be contemptible."⁸ The problem, as he points, out, is to find a "moral equivalent of war," a peaceful stimulation for the hardihood and competence instigated in bloodshed. This equivalent may be realized if we make available to every one the harmless excitement of the wilderness. Bertrand Russell has skillfully amplified this idea in his essay on "Machines and the Emotions." He expresses the significant conclusion that "many men would cease to desire war if they had opportunities to risk their lives in Alpine climbing."⁹

IV

In examining the esthetic importance of the wilderness I will not engage in the unprofitable task of evaluating the preciousness of different sorts of beauty, as, for instance, whether an acronical view over the Grand Canyon is worth more than the Apollo of Praxiteles. For such a rating would always have to be based on a subjective standard, whereas the essential for any measure is impersonality. Instead of such useless metaphysics I shall call attention to several respects in which the undisputed beauty of the primeval, whatever its relative merit, is distinctly unique.

Of the myriad manifestations of beauty, only natural phenomena like the wilderness are detached from all temporal relationship. All the beauties in the creation of alteration of which man has played even the slightest role are firmly anchored in the historic stream. They are temples of Egypt, oratory of Rome, painting of the Renaissance or music of the Classicists. But in the wild places nothing is moored more closely than to geologic ages. The silent wanderer crawling up the rocky shore of the turbulent river could be a savage from some prehistoric epoch or a fugitive from twentieth century mechanization.

The sheer stupendousness of the wilderness gives it a quality of intangibility which is unknown in ordinary manifestations of ocular beauty. These are always very definite two- or three-dimensional objects which can be physically grasped and circumscribed in a few moments. But "the beauty that shimmers in the yellow afternoons of October, who ever could clutch it."¹⁰ Any one who has looked across a ghostly valley at midnight, when moonlight makes a formless silver unity out of the drifting fog, knows how impossible it often is in nature to distinguish mass from hallucination. Any one who has stood upon a lofty summit and gazed over an inchoate tangle of deep canyons and cragged mountains, of sunlit lakelets and black expanses

of forest, has become aware of a certain giddy sensation that there are no distances, no measures, simply unrelated matter rising and falling without any analogy to the banal geometry of breadth, thickness and height. A fourth dimension of immensity is added which makes the location of some dim elevation outlined against the sunset as incommensurable to the figures of the topographer as life itself is to the quantitative table of elements which the analytic chemist proclaims to constitute vitality.

Because of its size the wilderness also has a physical ambiency about it which most forms of beauty lack. One looks from outside at works of art and architecture, listens from outside to music or poetry. But when one looks at and listens to the wilderness he is encompassed by his experience of beauty, lives in the midst of his esthetic universe.

A fourth peculiarity about the wilderness is that it exhibits a dynamic beauty. A Beethoven symphony or a Shakespearean drama, a landscape by Corot or a Gothic cathedral, once they are finished become virtually static. But the wilderness is in constant flux. A seed germinates, and a stunted seedling battles for decades against the dense shade of the virgin forest. Then some ancient tree blows down and the long-suppressed plant suddenly enters into the full vigor of delayed youth, grows rapidly from sapling to maturity, declines into the conky senility of many centuries, dropping millions of seed to start a new forest upon the rotting debris of its own ancestors, and eventually topples over to admit the sunlight which ripens another woodland generation.

Another singular aspect of the wilderness is that it gratifies every one of the senses. There is unanimity in venerating the sights and sounds of the forest. But what are generally esteemed to be the minor senses should not be slighted. No one who has ever strolled in springtime through seas of blooming violets, or lain at night on boughs of fresh balsam, or walked across dank holms in early morning can omit odor from the joys of the primordial environment. No one who has felt the stiff wind of mountaintops or the softness of untrodden sphagnum will forget the exhilaration experienced through touch. "Nothing ever tastes as good as when it's cooked in the woods" is a trite tribute to another sense. Even equilibrium causes a blithe exultation during many a river crossing on tenuous foot log and many a perilous conquest of precipice.

Finally, it is well to reflect that the wilderness furnishes perhaps the best opportunity for pure esthetic enjoyment. This requires that beauty be observed as a unity, and that for the brief duration of any pure esthetic experience the cognition of the observed object must completely fill the spectator's cosmos. There can be no extraneous thoughts—no question about the creator of the phenomenon, its structure, what it resembles or what vanity in the beholder it gratifies. "The purely esthetic observer has for the moment forgotten his own soul";⁴ he has only one sensation left and that is exquisiteness. In the wilderness, with its entire freedom from the manifestations of human will, that perfect objectivity which is essential for pure esthetic rapture can probably be achieved more readily than among any other forms of beauty.

V

But the problem is not all one-sided. Having discussed the tremendous benefits of the wilderness, it is now proper to ponder upon the disadvantages which uninhabited territory entails.

In the first place, there is the immoderate danger that a wilderness without developments for fire protection will sooner or later go up in smoke and down in ashes.

A second drawback is concerned with the direct economic loss. By locking up wilderness areas we as much as remove from the earth all the lumber, minerals, range land, water-power and agricultural possibilities which they contain. In the face of the tremendous demand for these resources it seems unpardonable to many to render nugatory this potential material wealth.

A third difficulty inherent in undeveloped districts is that they automatically preclude the bulk of the population from enjoying them. For it is admitted that at present only a minority of the genus *Homo* cares for wilderness recreation, and only a fraction of this minority possesses the requisite virility for the indulgence of this desire. Far more people can enjoy the woods by automobile. Far more would prefer to spend their vacations in luxurious summer hotels set on well-groomed lawns than in leaky, fly-infested shelters bundled away in the brush. Why then should this majority have to give up its rights?

VI

As a result of these last considerations the irreplaceable values of the wilderness are generally ignored, and a fatalistic attitude is adopted in regard to the ultimate disappearance of all unmolested localities. It is my contention that this outlook is entirely unjustified, and that almost all the disadvantages of the wilderness can be minimized by forethought and some compromise.

The problem of protection dictates the elimination of undeveloped areas of great fire hazard. Furthermore, certain infringements on the concept of an unsullied wilderness will be unavoidable in almost all instance. Trails, telephone lines and lookout cabins will have to be constructed, for without such precaution most forests in the west would be gutted. But even with these improvements the basic primitive quality still exists: dependence on personal effort for survival.

Economic loss could be greatly reduced by reserving inaccessible and unproductive terrain. Inasmuch as most of the highly valuable lands have already been exploited, it should be easy to confine a great share of the wilderness tracts to those lofty mountain regions where the possibility of material profit is unimportant. Under these circumstances it seems like the grossest illogicality for any one to object to the withdrawal of a few million acres of low-grade timber for recreational purposes when one hundred million acres of potential forest lie devastated.¹² If one tenth portion of this denuded land were put to its maximum productivity, it could grow more wood than all the proposed wilderness areas put together. Or if our forests, instead of attaining only 22 per cent of their possible production,¹³ were made to yield up to capacity, we could refrain from using three quarters of the timber in the country and still be better off than we are to-day. The way to meet our commercial demands is not to thwart legitimate divertisement, but to eliminate the unmitigated evils of fire and destructive logging. It is time we appreciated that the real economic problem is to see how little land need be employed for timber production, so that the remainder of the forest may be devoted to those other vital uses incompatible with industrial exploitation.

Even if there should be an underproduction of timber, it is well to recall that it is much cheaper to import lumber for industry than to export people for pastime. The freight rate from Siberia is not nearly as high as the passenger rate to Switzerland.

What small financial loss ultimately results from the establishment of wilderness areas must be accepted as a fair price to pay for their unaccessible preciousness. We spend about twenty-one billion dollars a year for entertainment of all sorts.¹⁴ Compared with this there is no significance to the forfeiture of a couple of million dollars of annual income, which is all that our maximum wilderness requirements would involve. Think what an enormously greater sum New York city alone sacrifices in the maintenance of Central Park.

But the automobilists argue that a wilderness domain precludes the huge majority of recreation-seekers from deriving any amusement whatever from it. This is almost as irrational as contending that because more people enjoy bathing than art exhibits therefore we should change our picture galleries into swimming pools. It is undeniable that the automobilist has more roads than he can cover in a lifetime. There are upward of 3,000,000¹⁵ miles of public highways in the United States, traversing many of the finest scenic features in the nation. Nor would the votaries of the wilderness object to the construction of as many more miles in the

vicinity of the old roads, where they would not be molesting the few remaining vestiges of the primeval. But when the motorists also demand for their particular diversion the insignificant wilderness residue, it makes even a Midas appear philanthropic.

Such are the differences among human beings in their sources of pleasure, that unless there is a corresponding diversity in their modes of life, they neither obtain their fair share of happiness, nor grow up to the mental, moral and esthetic stature of which their nature is capable. Why then should tolerance extend only to tastes and modes of life which extort acquiescence by the multitude of their adherents?⁶

It is of the utmost importance to concede the right of happiness also to people who find their delight in unaccustomed ways. This prerogative is valid even though its exercise may encroach slightly on the fun of the majority, for there is a point where an increase in the joy of the many causes a decrease in the joy of the few out of all proportion to the gain of the former. This has been fully recognized not only by such philosophers of democracy as Paine, Jefferson and Mill, but also in the practical administration of governments which spend prodigious sums of money to satisfy the expensive wants of only a fragment of the community. Public funds which could bring small additional happiness to the majority are diverted to support museums, art galleries, concerts, botanical gardens, menageries and golf-links. While these, like wilderness areas, are open to the use of every one, they are vital to only a fraction of the entire population. Nevertheless, they are almost universally approved, and the appropriations to maintain them are growing phenomenally.

VII

These steps of reasoning lead up to the conclusion that the preservation of a few samples of undeveloped territory is one of the most clamant issues before us today. Just a few years more of hesitation and the only trace of that wilderness which has exerted such a fundamental influence in molding American character will lie in the musty pages of pioneer books and the mumbled memories of tottering antiquarians. To avoid this catastrophe demands immediate action.

A step in the right direction has already been initiated by the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation,⁷ which has proposed twenty-one possible wilderness areas. Several of these have already been set aside in a tentative way by the Forest Service; others are undergoing more careful scrutiny. But this only represents the incipency of what ought to be done.

A thorough study should forthwith be undertaken to determine the probable wilderness needs of the country. Of course, no precise reckoning could be attempted, but a radical calculation would be feasible. It ought to be radical for three reasons: because it is easy to convert a natural area to industrial or motor usage, impossible to do the reverse; because the population which covets wilderness recreation is rapidly enlarging and because the higher standard of living which may be anticipated should give millions the economic power to gratify what is to-day merely a pathetic yearning. Once the estimate is formulated, immediate steps should be taken to establish enough tracts to insure every one who hungers for it a generous opportunity of enjoying wilderness isolation.

To carry out this program it is exigent that all friends of the wilderness ideal should unite. If they do not present the urgency of their view-point the other side will certainly capture popular support. Then it will only be a few years until the last escape from society will be barricaded. If that day arrives there will be countless souls born to live in strangulation, countless human beings who will be crushed under the artificial edifice raised by man. There is just one hope of repulsing the tyrannical ambition of civilization to conquer every niche on the whole earth. That hope is the organization of spirited people who will fight for the freedom of the wilderness.

Notes:

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6. Joseph Wood Krutch, "The Modern Temper."
7. Henry David Thoreau, "Journals," April 2, 1852.
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9. Bertrand Russell, "Essays in Scepticism."
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Margaret (Mardy) Murie (1902-2003)

“I am testifying as an emotional woman and I would like to ask you, gentlemen, what’s wrong with emotion? Beauty is a resource in and of itself. . . . I hope the United States of America is not so rich that she can afford to let these wildernesses pass by, or so poor she cannot afford to keep them.”

—Mardy Murie, Congressional testimony on the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act

Referred to as the “grandmother of the conservation movement,” Mardy Murie is a role model for wilderness educators. After a childhood spent in Washington State and Alaska and early adult years exploring the wild lands in Alaska, Murie devoted her adult life to preserving wilderness areas across North America. Her patience, passion, and perseverance made her a natural leader in the wilderness movement during the 20th century. Through her words, Murie conveyed to the public, and Congress, the need to permanently preserve wilderness through legislation.

Murie was partly raised in frontier Fairbanks, Alaska, in the early 1900s. After graduating from the University of Alaska in 1924 as its first woman graduate, she married a pioneer arctic researcher for the United States Biological Survey, Olaus Murie. They spent their honeymoon researching caribou on a 500-mile dogsled journey through the Brooks Range of Alaska. Traveling in wild lands became a way of life for the Muries.

When research brought the Muries to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, they eventually set up a permanent residence from which they continued to travel and promote wilderness preservation. In 1945 their passion for wilderness led them to a national role when Olaus accepted a position as director of The Wilderness Society. In this role, the Muries worked closely, though often remotely, with Howard Zahniser, the Society’s executive secretary. During this time, Olaus and Mardy joined efforts to promote congressional preservation of wild lands. Their diligent and dedicated work to protect Alaska’s remote Brooks Range and the Sheenjek River culminated in the establishment of what is now the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. When Olaus died in 1963, Mardy carried on and continued to advocate for a National Wilderness Preservation System. She stood alongside Alice Zahniser in the White House Rose Garden on September 3, 1964 when President Lyndon Johnson signed The Wilderness Act, just under a year after Olaus’ death.

Mardy continued to be a strong advocate for wilderness preservation. While serving on the Governing Council of The Wilderness Society, Mardy was in the forefront promoting the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, which added 56 million acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System and greatly increased National Park Service acreage. The most recent acknowledgement of Mardy’s lifetime service to conservation was in 1998, when President Clinton bestowed upon her the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The visionary approach of both Mardy and Olaus Murie has led the way for wilderness preservation in America.

For further reference:

Margaret Murie, *Two in the Far North*

Margaret Murie, *Wapiti Wilderness*

Arctic Dance: The Mardy Murie Story, 2001 (VHS video), Producers: Charles Craighead and Bonnie Kreps, Narrator: Harrison Ford.

<http://www.muriecenter.org/>

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I grew up in Fairbanks. Two months after graduation from the University of Alaska, I married a government biologist and spent the following years with him in the field in all his studies. On expeditions in Alaska, Wyoming, and New Zealand we had three children along with us. In later years, when my husband was Director of the Wilderness Society, we had more expeditions, more travels, more work for the preservation of wilderness.

Now I have come back to my home country after an eight-year absence. My own bird's eye view (which may be altered in the weeks following up here this summer) is that Alaska is both physically and emotionally split by the Pipeline. But I don't want or intend to talk about the Pipeline. I'm sure Alyeska is building it swiftly, expeditiously, and with environmental concern. But what the Pipeline started, Alaska will have to deal with in 1990 with oil, fish, minerals, timber, recreation, and people competing for them. Perhaps, we may learn a bit about humanities—human, man—and whether man is human enough or deserves that term. And I hope very much that we shall have here at this forum not only words, but some definite suggestions for action.

For myself I should like to enter here a plea for the consideration of the non-humanities, non-human values, for the land itself, but also for man—part of man's need. I grew up in Fairbanks when James Wickersham was battling in Congress for a government railroad for Alaska. Wood was the only fuel. Hillsides were stripped of birch forest to feed the boilers at all the little placer mines. Every household burned ten cords of wood a winter. The water-man brought you two or four buckets of water each day. The nameless hero came in the night to remove the necessary from the privy in the woodshed. Nothing was easy, but everyone counted. Everyone was cared for—a bigger and beautiful library, and hospitals. There were dress up parties, home-grown concerts, and plays, and always dances. I don't think people dance enough any more. Dance all night. Go to the Model Cafe for breakfast. Go home. Change your clothes and go to work. There were quarrels, but always humor. And, we had the march scandal too. It was expected always—at least one. As a small child, I remember the whistles and the siren blowing and everyone rushing to First Avenue—an impromptu parade. Dear old Mr. Gobrecht's German Band was marching and someone had found a coal scuttle and was waving it as he marched. Wickersham had won. Alaska was going to have a railroad. The coal mines could be opened. It was coal then. Now it is oil. But what a different accompaniment! Then the placer days were over and the great slump came during World War I. The railroad was not finished until 1922. Then came the second gold boom. This time it was the big companies from outside. And big dredges. Now, that boom is over. Now, it is oil. Joe Meeker in his *Comedy of Survival* says, speaking of a pioneering species in any environment, “These are highly generalized, flexible and adaptable creatures, capable of surviving despite the inhospitable nature of their environment. Pioneers must be aggressive, competitive and tough.” The early Alaskans were all these things. For surely Alaska resisted rape with everything she had. Biting cold, rampaging streams, heartbreaking muskeg swamps, formidable mountains, stormy seas, impenetrable forest, and *mosquitos!* Now man is above all that—he flies. No place is too remote. No place is safe from man's touch. Joe Meeker also says, “with the machine empowered the garden is doomed.” Man was little in those days. Now he is big with his bulldozer. But let's think for a moment about the Chief of Police of Fairbanks being interviewed in his office recently. He was calm and relaxed. He said, “Oh, it's just another boom. After a while it will go away.”

This past winter I spent many hours reading the journals my husband has kept during all the years he worked in Alaska as a naturalist. And I should like to quote here from his journal written at Nenana, Alaska, September 5, 1925. You may remember, some of you, that Nenana was a boom town during the building of the railroad, and especially because of the great bridge they built across the Tanana there. The notes say: “I think of the old stampede days when steamers plied frantically up and down the Yukon, when hammer and saw made joyful sound

of industry, and hope and enthusiasm filled the air. And now, these empty buildings, broken windows, and silence. I look out of my hotel window. The hill across the Tanana glows with gold and yellow and pale green of the birches. The red of the blueberry bushes in Autumn dress penetrating the dark spruce. It's pleasing, giving me a wholesome feeling. The old gold rush is gone—must always go. But this golden hill has always been there—it's still there. And autumn among the birches belongs to a stable civilization with homes and children, schools and swimming holes. Slower growth but more desirable for Alaska."

Will it "go away"? Or, are we already locked into a system which is voracious? Locked into opposing camps? Will we be so blind and helpless that we lose the most precious things, after all?

I quote here from an article by Jim Hunter: "So those facing North to the wilderness have two radically different visions on what to do with it. There are many who subscribe to development and growth as synonymous with national security and greatness; there are many others who view the preservation of Alaska as a turning point, as a welcome antivenin for an already poisoned earth. Perhaps the real enemy of the wilderness is an invalid American dream. Perhaps too late we're learning that a diet of metal and oil will kill us. Perhaps too late we will discover that the valid new frontiers exist in the spirit and in technology and that no matter where the new frontiers will be, human beings cannot do without wilderness. Alaska, the accidental purchase, has left this nation, with a storehouse of green wilderness—vitamin A-I.

"While irresponsible developers, and this does not mean all developers, push to get there first, to get rich first, they fail to realize the greatest resource Alaska has to offer a sick America is clean air and pure water and wild lands. And it is not just the developers. Because without a population which applauded them and purchased their products, they could not continue. The developer may be the hammerhead, but society is the handle and all the power coming down behind it. And as sure as society can smash the hammer down on Alaskan Wilderness, it can also throw the hammer away. And this time around will be the last time."

I don't need to tell you that much has happened in Alaska since I was up here in 1967. That summer I saw parts of Alaska I had never seen before because I was travelling with my friend, Mildred Capion, who was making a film, "Alaskan Summer". On our return that autumn, I spoke at a banquet in Seattle and I'm going to tell you a few of the things I said then, which was eight years ago now.

"I went back to Alaska this summer, travelled 10,000 miles with my friend in her Ford Travel Wagon. Ferried to Prince Rupert and Wrangell and it rained, to Petersburg and it rained, and to Juneau and it was lovely. Flew to Fairbanks for commencement at the University of Alaska, and back to Juneau and Glacier Bay for 5 great days; to Sitka and it was beautiful; and back on the ferry to Haines and 4 wonderful days, and on to the Interior to Anchorage and Homer; by ferry to Kodiak for 6 days, then to Kenai and the Moose Range and a canoe trip and a flight over the Kenai Mountains and to Palmer and the dairy farms; McKinley Park, and to Fairbanks and the Steese Highway to Circle, and to Valdez and by ferry to Cordova and the salmon canneries. Back over the highway to Tok and the Taylor Highway to Eagle on the Yukon and then to Dawson and Whitehorse and Carcross and the railroad to Skagway and return. And finally all the way home to Moose, Wyoming. We were not long on the ferry out of Prince Rupert before getting the feel of the new Alaska. There was a fascinating mixture of people on board. Going through Wrangell Narrows at dusk, very quiet, under a slow bell, everyone watching those close shores. A young man, a pile-driver operator in the timber industry, was talking quietly. He said, 'Never a dull moment in the new State of Alaska. If you keep your eyes and ears open for what's around you—and we don't have so much artificial amusements up here, so we keep our eyes and ears open for what's around us.' The new Alaskans. The young men all love the life. Some of the wives do, some don't. The young mechanic who towed us into Tok for repairs said that he loved hunting in the fall and snowshoeing in the winter, but his wife hates it. In Fairbanks a taxi driver told my friend, 'I came up here 12 years ago for two weeks.

Never been back, no desire to go back.’ At a cannery near Haines, a young fisherman was mending his nets, ‘I wouldn’t live anywhere else. Always something beautiful to look at. Wake up in the morning, look out the window, always something beautiful—nice to look at.’ Why do they love it? The land itself most of all, I think. Even though some of them are busy altering it, busy killing the thing they love, making it like all the other states. But most of Alaska’s new people do love it. Will there be enough who care? The struggle will be between these two—both new. One group thinking of a whole life, the other making money and getting out. As for the old timers, the Sourdoughs, they live in nostalgia and can they be blamed? There were, in spite of hardships, so many charming things in that old life—dog teams, stern-wheel steamers on the rivers, absolute freedom. If a prospector didn’t make it in one creek there were plenty of other creeks to try. At Forty-Mile last summer we stopped to take movies at the road house where they were raising Siberian Huskies. One of the partners said, ‘So where’s there to go anymore? Up at Barrow they say there’s only two dog teams left. Everybody’s got those skidoos, and natural gas piped into their houses. So where’s there to go anymore? Forty-Mile’s the only place left, I guess. The people there don’t *want* that new stuff.’

“What did my friend film? Glacier Bay, a threat of mining; Sitka, the pulp mill, a big freighter loading just as we pulled into the cove; at Haines another huge freighter loading logs, 4,500,000 board feet at a load. At Kodiak diversified fishing has arrived there. A huge new fish plant is being built. At Kenai, oil rigs in the forest and offshore. Much of this industry must be accepted. But, the overriding thought in my mind is, while all this is going on, what is being left for the one industry which can be most lucrative, non-destructive, self-perpetuating for all times, a commodity in short supply in other world markets? The industry of simply letting people come to see and enjoy Alaska. What is next for Alaska? What will be left of the distinctive Alaskan features which draw the tourist? We talked to many tourists this past summer, and what were they looking for? Size, vastness, magnificence, naturalness, informality of life, enthusiasm, happy people, and mountains and glaciers, waterfalls, great trees, whales, porpoises, birds, all the other wildlife, but also, a glimpse of the old Alaska and of the everyday life of its people. I saw tourists stopping at a garden in Fairbanks admiring the cabbages, the peas, and all the rest, and talking to the white-haired old-timer who was working in the garden. At Miller House on the Steese Highway we stopped in to see if they served breakfast. The old proprietor said: ‘No, we don’t do that anymore but come on in and set awhile and light your pipe and visit anyway.’ These are the things tourists will remember and take home with them. The life, the feelings of those who live in Alaska. There are some who want a martini and a thick steak every night. That is one kind of tourist. But there are others, and I think they’ll be more numerous, who are seeking, I believe, a picture of the past. They liked that Alaska 67 Exposition, not just because it was a picture of the past, but because that past had a virility, a ruggedness, an individual freedom that is fast disappearing, and for which they have a longing in the midst of our copy-cat, plastic civilization.

“Alaska has lots of problems. But I am hopeful she will solve some. And in my mind, the most important thing is saving the land itself. And the problems here are big business and big government. What is all the business for? Millions for a few?

“Again, here we have the new people and the old who want money, and the people who seek a whole life who feel what kind of life and future without the great big beautiful land itself, plus, the Sourdoughs that are appalled at the whole thing. I hope there will be an Alaska for the young mechanic at Tok, for the young student who wants to explore glaciers, for the Indian or Eskimo who still wants to live in his village, for the young University couple who merely want to live in a little house in the woods, and for the young fisherman who wants to keep on fishing in his own little boat and look out every morning at something nice.”

Well, eight years have gone by since I said all those words in Seattle.

What now? What are the forces working in Alaska? Big business, big labor, big government, state and federal bureaucrats held upright by pressure from all sides, and getting the slings and arrows from all sides; scientists, government and otherwise, who carry on their beloved research and wonder if anybody will listen to them; wonder if the forces will listen to them. Old Alaskans who are on the band-wagon of all the new business, old Alaskans who wish they had never heard the word *pipeline* and wonder whether to go somewhere else; new Alaskans who want a good simple life, and are willing to work in the battle to save something of the real Alaska; and, perhaps most important of all, the Natives who are also divided between those who want to keep their own ways, their own village life, and those who want the Natives to be right in there with development, and dollars, and the “good things of life.”

What *are* the good things of life? And can all these forces (none of which are just going to “go away”) realize that they must talk, think, act, eat together? Who is right? No one completely, of course. But given all these forces, what philosophy will be followed for a lifestyle in 1990? How much of Alaska for change, for development, for profits, for jobs, for more population? How much for the land itself as it now is? With all its potential gifts of subsistence living, of scientific discoveries, of helpful recreation, of inspiration. On this point do we have to split and declare war? I plead for a plan under which there will always be room for a healthy economy, for a healthy population, with a great deal of Alaska left alone.

In Wyoming, I live on a former private in-holding in Grand Teton National Park, on the Snake River bottoms, in the woods at 6,400 feet altitude. Our place used to be a dude ranch and there are three houses on it. The wildlife is plentiful. I had a moose come along the road and say goodbye to me as I was leaving for the airport the other morning, and we're all zealous to keep it that way. I counted 18 species of mammals on that 77 acres. Last fall a cat appeared, probably dropped off by some tourist going by. I called the Rangers. They came with live traps and lots of good fishy bait and the cat defeated all of us—and our efforts. And, somehow, that creature managed to survive our winter—six feet of snow on the level, blizzards, cold. In April, the snow still deep, the woman who lives in the middle house on the ranch came into her kitchen one evening at dusk, and there saw two dark blobs on the bird tray which is attached to the kitchen window. A mother porcupine and her baby had been around all winter and that was normal to see them there. But there was a third blob—yes, the cat! Up there on the bird tray eating with the porcupines! You wonder why I'm telling you this. Well, it occurred to me, if cats and porcupines can eat together and tolerate each other, shouldn't conservationists and businessmen be able to do likewise? And, not only these two forces, but all the others?

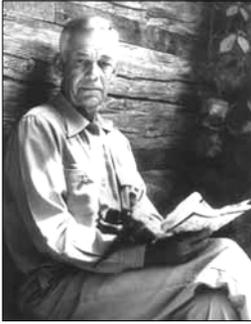
I think we have not had the courage to be entirely frank with one another, and this is a point in history when we must be. And, we must talk together. I think my main theme is this, that perhaps man is going to be overwhelmed with his own cleverness. That he may even destroy himself with this same cleverness. And, I firmly believe that one of the very few hopes for man is the preservation of the wilderness we now have left and the greatest reservoir of that medicine for man lies here in Alaska. This sounds radical, I know. I don't mean to be saying that all the modern inventions and discoveries and developments are bad for man. I remember the old days and I know they weren't *always* the “good old days.” What I'm trying to say is that somewhere along the line we have lost control of the things we have created. We have learned to need all the comforts and refinements and things and gadgets which all the technology has presented to us. We are constantly being bombarded with beguiling messages about how much we need all these things. And, big corporations, big bureaucracies feed on themselves, become such entities in themselves, so imbued with the great American dream that growth is a God and that bigger is better and that the thought of decreasing size or a steady State society is an anathema, that to me they have become terrifying. So I'm beginning to wonder where in all this complexity of things is there going to be a voice which says, “Look, where are we going? Hadn't we better stop and look ourselves over?” Perhaps the voices will come from many directions—from the Native villages, from the smaller communities, from the bureaucrats, from the legislators—who knows?

I recommend to your notice the articles by Doug McConnell and Stephen Reeve and by Larry Mayo in the Fall, 1974, issue of the *Alaska Conservation Review*. There are specific suggestions here for input from the public by use of the media into plans for the future of Alaska. I recommend Sam Wright's suggestions in his recent newsletter from Tasseraluk Institute that there be a state-wide education program on what Alaskans want for the future based on grassroots meetings, media presentation, and questionnaires. Does that sound too complicated?

To put it simply, we must all get into the act. If there were only some potent inspiration which would cause every Alaskan to sit down and write in a few words what he wants for his State for the future and send it in to some central clearing house, that would be an example of democracy in action, wouldn't it? And a storehouse of information for decision. If I were required to write such a page, I would first give homage to those Alaskans who are already leading a simple life with a minimum of things, self-sustaining, on renewable resources. And I would say, "For goodness sake, let them have control of their land and the chance to show the rest of us how it is done." We can agree that there is no turning the clock back. The people are here. The economy must remain. But, with some foresight, some scrutinizing of man's real needs, we could begin to have a plan for Alaska and it would begin with each town and each borough.

But underlying all the meetings and the talks and the plans it seems to me is the great doom-thought: when all of Alaska's nonrenewable resources are dug out, piped away, cut down—what lifestyle then? And here I submit once more my theme that man, too clever, too far away from the earth, is not happy. I believe that man needs wilderness for five reasons: (1) wilderness preservation for space—elbow room for man—untouched by man; (2) for scientific research. For man's benefit, of course, but also for that of all other creatures—plant and animal. We so far know just enough to know that we haven't begun to know all. That there are all kinds of things to be discovered in the natural world which cannot be discovered anywhere else; (3) for water-shed protection. To keep man's busy, selfish world healthy; (4) for physical recreation of all kinds to keep man's selfish to unselfish body healthy; and (5) for what it gives man's spirit.

There is something elemental and unchangeable here I think. Perhaps there are men who feel no need for nature. They are fortunate in a way perhaps. But for those who somehow feel unnurtured, missing something, groping for something satisfying, surely there should still be a place, a big place—wilderness. Again, man for all his ego is not the only creation. Other species have some rights too. Wilderness itself, the basis of all our life, does it have a right to live on? Having furnished all the requisites of our proud materialistic civilization, our neon-lit society, does it have a right to live on? Do we have enough reverence for life to concede to wilderness this right? I submit that when all the non-renewable resources are gone, Alaska could still have a resource which will support a healthy economy, and a happy life for her people for all time. And that this happy possibility for lifestyle 1990 depends on how much of unspoiled Alaska is saved now. I know it is very poor taste to quote from one's own books, but somehow I could not find any other way to say what I wanted to say at the end of this talk. So I do quote from the preface to *Two in the Far North*, which was published in 1962: "What, after all, are the most precious things in a life? We had a honeymoon in an age when the world was sweet and untrammelled and safe. Up there in the Koyukuk there were very few machines of any kind; but there was joy in companionship and in the simple things—like the crackle of a fire, having tea and bread while the rain pattered on the roof, a chance meeting with a friend on the dog-team trail ... Here in Alaska people still count, as much today as in the twenties. I would love to think the world will survive its obsession with machines to see a day when people respect one another all over the world. It seems as clear as a shaft of the Aurora that this is our only hope. My prayer is that Alaska will not lose the heart-nourishing friendliness of her youth—that her people will always care for one another, her towns remain friendly and not completely ruled by the dollar—and that her great wild places will remain great and wild and free, where wolf and caribou, wolverine and grizzly bear, and all the Arctic blossoms may live on in the delicate balance which supported them long before impetuous man appeared in the North. This is the great gift Alaska can give to the harassed world."



Sigurd Olson (1899-1982)

“ . . . only by encouraging wonder in others and explaining to millions of people its true meaning, can we ever be sure of preserving any wilderness on our planet.”

—Sigurd Olson, from a talk at the 9th Biennial Wilderness Conference, April 1965

Sigurd Olson has been called “the poetic voice of the modern wilderness movement.” Though most often remembered for his writings, Olson played a critical role as a political advisor and activist in establishing and preserving a number of national parks, seashores, and wilderness areas. As a biologist, Olson compellingly linked science to the intangibles of wilderness. From his personal explorations in wild areas, Olson ardently believed that wilderness provided spiritual experiences vital to modern civilization, and this conviction formed the basis of both his conservation and writing careers.

Olson was born in Chicago, Illinois, and spent most of his childhood in northern Wisconsin, where he formed his strong attachment to nature and outdoor recreation. The place that Olson came to call home was Ely, Minnesota, and the wild waterways of the Quetico-Superior and Boundary Water areas nearby. Olson traveled and guided trips in those waters for many years. There he found respite from his demanding, and sometimes unpopular, frontline public involvement in conservation issues. He stated, from his own experiences, “Some places should be preserved from development or exploitation for they satisfy human need for solace, belonging, and perspective” (testimony at congressional field hearing in Ely, Minnesota).

Among his many positions, Olson served as wilderness ecologist for the Izaak Walton League of America, as president of the National Parks Association, as vice-president and then president of the Wilderness Society, and as an advisor to the National Park Service and to the secretary of the interior. He worked closely with Howard Zahniser, Olaus Murie, and others in drafting and editing The Wilderness Act. The specific clauses in the Act concerning motorized use in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (section 4.d.5) were included due to local concerns in Olson’s hometown of Ely. Olson and his family were shunned at community events because of his involvement with wilderness preservation, and the locals believed that the economy of the town would suffer with the “locking up” of wild lands. Olson stood strong against the rising tide of misunderstanding and clearly articulated and communicated to the community, and the nation, that the Wilderness Act did not alter the current use conditions. (Later, in 1978, congressional action did eliminate motorized use in the Boundary Waters.) Olson’s role as a spokesperson for the human need for wilderness continues to inspire those that seek the solace of wild places and to preserve the character of wilderness for future generations.

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The Spiritual Need for Wilderness

(Olson gave this talk in April 1965 at the 9th Biennial Wilderness Conference, held in San Francisco. It was published in Bruce M. Kilgore, editor, “Wilderness in a Changing World,” San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1966.)

I am happy to talk about the spiritual values of wilderness because I feel they are all important—the real reason for all the practical things we must do to save wilderness. In the last analysis it is the spiritual values we are really fighting to preserve.

Not all look to the wilderness for spiritual sustenance. Some seem to get along very well without it, finding their values in different ways. Others must know wilderness at first hand, must experience it physically, as well as spiritually. There is a great diversity in wilderness appreciation and wilderness need, but I have discovered in a lifetime of traveling in primitive regions, a lifetime of seeing people living in the wilderness and using it, that there is a hard core of wilderness need in everyone, a core that makes its spiritual values a basic human necessity. There is no hiding it. The core is there, no matter how sophisticated, blasé, and urban one might be. Deep down inside all of us is a need of wilderness.

I shall not attempt to enter the vast realm of religious belief or the concept of a Deity, though there is a close correlation between them and the spiritual values of wilderness which in themselves are only one facet of the entire complex, a facet which cannot be disregarded in probing the problem of man's relationship to God and the universe.

In order to speak intelligently about such intangibles as the spiritual, we must attempt to define them, for they are often misunderstood and impossible to measure by ordinary standards. We are accustomed to associate the spiritual with such immortal lines as, "He leadeth me beside still waters; He annointeth my soul;" or "I lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help." No one needs to explain or define the meaning of such expressions, for we sense intuitively and from long association and personal experience, the joy and lift of spirit they epitomize. Even those who think wilderness means nothing share in this reaction to visions that actually had their origin in the ancient concept of far horizons, beauty, and silence.

There is far more, however, to the spiritual values of wilderness than the beautiful music of the Psalms and the emotional release they bring. Webster, in defining the spiritual, speaks of the soul, the essence, eternal values as opposed to the worldly or carnal—the imponderables as against the tangibles. A philosophy is involved, a way of looking at life, and a perspective that goes deeply into value judgments that affect our happiness.

We might argue any of these points and try to explain or analyze, as many have done before us. Volumes have been written by theologians and philosophers on their meaning, but the more exhaustively we delve into the discussions, the more we are convinced that argument is futile in view of the differences in individual understanding and belief stemming from reactions that range from the faintest glimmerings in comprehension to the ultimate beatific vision of the saints and prophets.

On one point all agree: that spiritual values contribute to joy and richness of living; that without them existence lacks color and warmth, and the soul itself is drab and impoverished. We accept the broad premise that such values, inspired by the contemplation of wilderness beauty and mystery, were the well springs of our dawning culture and the first significant expressions of the human mind. True in the nebulous past, it is as true today no matter how life has changed or what has happened to our environment.

I am confident that Stone Age man, who some forty thousand years ago painted his symbols on the caves of France and Spain, was powerfully stirred by the mystery of the unknown and the spirit world that dwelt there. Such surviving examples of prehistoric art tell of the millennia when man pondered his environment as an awareness finally dawned that the dreams, longings, fears, and hopes that haunted him could be translated into forms of meaning and permanence. Symbols from which spells and magic went forth to influence hunting, fertility, and success in his various ventures—they represented the growing world of the spirit, the first indications of the mighty concept of immortality, and the realization that after death men would dwell forever in the vast vault of the heavens. It was then he emerged from the dark abyss of his past into a world of mind and soul and began to give form to his deepest and most profound emotions.

But why, we ask, does modern man, now almost completely removed from his wilderness background, still look to the hills for his spiritual help in meeting the tensions and pressures of this age? Why does he yearn for open space and naturalness, for the sea with its immensities, for vistas across valleys and mountain ranges? Why on weekends and holidays does he stream from his crowded and clamorous cities into the open countryside?

Anthropologically, the answer is simple. A hundred thousand years have elapsed since man's emergence from the primitive, perhaps a million or more if we go back to the very beginnings of the race to which he belongs. During all this time he lived close to the earth, regulating his life by the seasons, hunting his food, knowing the fears, challenges, and satisfactions of a life entirely dependent upon nature. Only during the last forty thousand years did he develop any sort of culture and not until ten thousand years ago leave any evidence of historical record. Until the last century, the broad pattern of his life had actually varied little. To be sure, there were cities long before that, but the vast majority of people lived on the land or in small rural communities still close to the influences of the past. Then in the space of a few decades, he was literally hurled into a machine age of whirring speed and complexity where the ancient ecological and emotional balances were upset and his way of life utterly changed.

In the light of his primitive conditioning, man is still part of the past, responsive to, and dependent upon the type of environment from which he came. Adaptations come slowly in all creatures and man is no exception. When weary and confused by the life he is now leading, it is no wonder he longs to escape from the barriers he has built around himself. It is natural for him to dream of freedom and to look backward to a time when life was simpler, to old familiar trails where the terrain is known. There seems to be an almost universal urge, no matter what the stage of man's sophistication or removal from the natural, to align himself somehow with those forces and influences that were dominant for ages.

Stanley Diamond said: "The longing for a primitive mode of existence is no mere fantasy or sentiment whim; it is consonant with fundamental human needs . . . The search for the primitive is as old as civilization. It is the search for the utopia of the past projected into the future; it is paradise lost and paradise regained . . . inseparable from the vision of civilization."

A man may not really know why he climbs a mountain, crosses a desert, travels by canoe down some strange waterway, or sees the national parks or the wilderness areas of the national forests from the comfort of an automobile. Somehow in spite of himself, the spiritual penetrates his consciousness, and he absorbs a sense of vastness, far horizons, and silence plus other intangibles always found away from cities and towns. It may not be realized until afterward, but in some moment of quiet remembering, the essence of wildness comes to him like an almost forgotten dream—the inevitable aftermath, the spiritual values responsible for the glow and the inner satisfactions such experiences leave.

Man's great problem today is to make the transition, to bridge the gap between the Old World and the new, to understand the reason for his discontent with things as they are, and to recognize the solution. His Old World of superstition, evil spirits, and fear is gone. Gone too his dependence on the wilderness and his sense of close relationship, belonging, and animal oneness with the earth and the life around him. He must recognize now that while some of his spiritual roots have been severed, he still has his gods, and that his attitude toward wilderness has entered a new phase in which for the first time in his evolution as a thinking, perceptive creature, he can look at it with understanding and appreciation of its deeper meanings, knowing that within its borders may be the answer to his longing for naturalness. He needs to know that the spiritual values that once sustained him are still there in the timelessness and majestic rhythms of those parts of the world he has not ravished.

With this realization, wilderness assumes new and great significance. It concerns all of humanity and has philosophical implications that give breadth to the mind and nourish the spirit. Because man's subconscious is steeped in the primitive, looking to the wilderness

actually means a coming home to him, a moving into ancient grooves of human and prehuman experience. So powerful is the impact of returning that whether a man realizes it or not, reactions are automatically set in motion that bring in their train an uplift of the spirit. It is as though, tormented by some inner and seemingly unsolvable problem, he is suddenly released from frustration and perplexity and sees his way.

One of the great challenges confronting those who believe in the preservation of wilderness is to build a broader base of values than physical recreation, a base of sufficient depth and solidity to counter the charge that it exists for only a privileged and hardy few. Should this be possible, and I believe it is through stressing its all-encompassing humanitarian values, then there will no longer be any question of its importance to mankind. Only when the true significance of wilderness is fully understood will it be safe from those who would despoil it.

Josef Pieper, a German philosopher, in speaking of the meaning of leisure, said it is a form of silence, a receptive and contemplative attitude of mind and soul, and a capacity for steeping oneself in the whole of creation. He might just as well have been explaining man's attitude in approaching the wilderness.

He quotes Plato, who said: "But the gods, taking pity on mankind born to work, laid down a succession of recurring feasts to restore them from their fatigue so that nourishing themselves in festive companionship with the gods, they should again stand upright and erect."

Companionship with the gods and true leisure—this is perhaps what modern man seeks when he goes to the wilderness. This much we know is true: that while a man is with his gods, no matter who they may be, he can forget the problems and petty distractions of the workaday world and reach out to spiritual realizations that renew him. Only through receptiveness, contemplation, and awareness does anyone open himself to the great intuitions and consciousness of what life and the universe really mean.

Thomas Aquinas once said: "To know the universal essence of things is to reach a point of view from which the whole of being and all existing things become visible; and at the same time the spiritual outpost so reached enables man to look at the landscape of the universe." [Editorial note: These words actually belong to Josef Pieper, from a discussion of Thomas Aquinas in Pieper's book *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*.]

I like the idea of looking at the landscape of the universe, for it condenses into one shining vision the whole concept of spiritual experience. By "essence" Aquinas means the reality of man's relationship to the universe of which he is a part. If a man can sense this, if he can even glimpse the infinity Aquinas talks about, he might see the landscape of the universe.

Some years ago, I accompanied the famous geologist and geographer Wallace Atwood on a glaciological survey of the Quetico-Superior country. We wanted to see what had happened to the old pre-glacial stream patterns of the rivers which ages ago carried the wreckage of the awesome Laurentian Mountains toward the seas of the south.

We sat before our fire one night and talked about what we had seen, but mostly we admired the beautiful specimens of porphyry we had found on Lake Saganaga. Dr. Atwood had a prize specimen in his hand, and as he turned it over and over, allowing the firelight to strike its crystals, his eyes shone.

"Tell me," I said finally, "how is it that near the age of eighty you still get as much pleasure and excitement out of finding a new specimen as though you were a geology student on his first field trip?"

He gazed in the fire awhile before answering. "The secret," he said, "is never to lose the power of wonder. If you keep that alive, you stay young forever. If you lose it, you die."

I have never forgotten what he said, and I know now that the power of wonder is back of all creative thought and effort, and without it scientists, artists, and thinkers in all disciplines would lose the spur and challenge to learn and explore the mysteries about them. Wonder becomes then a spiritual value, the basic source of energy and inspiration in the evolution of the mind of man. Though we may produce life and eventually know the answers to all the secrets, we must never forget that wonder was responsible.

Albert Einstein reaffirmed this truth when he said: “The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. I am satisfied with the mystery of the eternity of life and of being able, through awareness of glimpsing the marvelous structure of the existing world together with the devoted striving, to comprehend a portion of it, be it ever so tiny, of the Reason that manifests itself in nature.”

Over the centuries a host of other great minds have also believed that if through awareness and wonder man might recognize even faintly his personal relationship to the universe, he would then partake and become part of the order and reason that governs his existence, the movement of galaxies, as well as the minutest divisions of matter. From the early scriptures and through all cultures, this profound concept has echoed and re-echoed as man realized its immensity and spiritual connotations. A grand concept, it has increased the stature of man and stood the test of time.

Prerequisite to understanding the lofty ideas of Plato and Aquinas is developing the capacity of awareness and wonder. If this ability is one of the important potentials of man, and the quality of inciting it one of the spiritual values of wilderness, here is an opportunity—for only by encouraging wonder in others and explaining to millions of people its true meaning, can we ever be sure of preserving any wilderness on our planet.

When Aquinas, in speaking of wonder, said, “Man’s first experience with it sets his feet on the ladder that may lead to beatific vision,” he meant what to him and other seers was the supreme climax of spiritual revelation.

The late Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, one of the loftiest minds of this age, in speaking of such moments said: “But now the atmosphere around him becomes sustaining, consistent and warm. As he awakens to a sense of universal unification, a wave of new life penetrates to the fiber and marrow of the least of his undertakings and the least of his desires. Everything glows as if impregnated with the essential flavor of the absolute, showing our accession beyond all ideologies and systems to a different and higher sphere, a new spiritual dimension.”

While it is good to know how great minds feel and to bask in the aura of their perception, we realize we are ordinary men who must, in order to understand, translate such experiences into concepts that can be applied to the problems of living in an age seemingly dedicated to the destruction of ancient values and our environment. What can we deduce from their expressions that bear on the kind of wilderness experience we are concerned with? Is there anything tangible we can apply to life as we know it? What broad conclusions from their flights into mystery and revelation can we use? They speak of oneness and unity with life and the universe, of the eternal essence, and the perception of reality. What exactly does this mean to us?

Lewis Mumford gave us a clue when he said, “Man’s biological survival is actually involved in cosmic processes, and he prospers best when some sense of cosmic purpose attends his daily activities.”

Wilderness offers this sense of cosmic purpose if we can open our hearts and minds to its possibilities. It may come in such moments of revelation as Aquinas, Chardin, and others speak about, burning instants of truth when everything stands clear. It may come as a slow

realization after long periods of waiting. Whenever it comes, life is suddenly illumined, beautiful, and transcendent, and we are filled with awe and deep happiness. All of us have known such moments but seldom recognized them at the time or comprehended their meaning. At least so it is with me and possibly with most of us whose experiences have come to us in the wilds.

I remember several such moments—an evening when I had climbed to the summit of Robinson Peak in the Quetico to watch the sunset: the flaming ball trembling on the very edge of a far ridge—fluid, alive, pulsating. As I watched it sink slowly into the dusk, it seemed to me I could actually feel the earth turning away from it, and sense its rotation.

Once many years ago, I stood gazing down a wilderness waterway with a fleet of rocky islands floating in the distance. The loons were calling, echoes rolling back from the shores and from unknown lakes across the ridges until the dusk seemed alive with their music. I was aware then of a fusion with the country, an overwhelming sense of completion in which all my hopes and experiences seemed concentrated in the moment before me.

I shall not attempt to analyze my reactions nor correlate them with order or reason, and I believe to try would be a mistake. I was not particularly aware of destiny or my role in the great plan. What I did carry away with me was a sense of wonder and deep contentment, a certain feeling of wholeness and fulfillment as though I needed nothing more. It would take a greater and more perceptive mind than mine to explain their full significance, and were they to do so, they might discover our moments of revelation were the same.

Life as it is lived for most people today is a fragmentary sort of thing, and man often feels as impermanent and transitory as the things he has built. If through such experiences as these he can somehow catch a feeling of wholeness or a hint of cosmic consciousness, he will know what the sages have been trying to tell us. No two people have the same type of experience, nor do they ever come in identical ways or similar situations. When I think of man's spiritual need of wilderness, I believe that the opportunity of being aware of and knowing such moments is an important part of it.

If, as Harrison Brown said, "The spiritual resources of man are the critical resources," then wilderness, which fosters such values, must be preserved. If we can believe what the wise have said for thousands of years, then there is hope for wildness and beauty in our environment. If spirit is a power and a force that spells the difference between richness of living and sterility, then we know what we must do. It may well be that with our swiftly expanding population, the movement away from nature into vast city complexes and the decimation facing much of the land, that the wilderness we can hold now will become the final bastions of the spirit of man. Unless we can preserve places where the endless spiritual needs of man can be fulfilled and nourished, we will destroy our culture and ourselves.



Howard Zahniser (1906-1964)

“The wilderness that has come to us from the eternity of the past we have the boldness to project into the eternity of the future.”

—Howard Zahniser, Testimony in
Wilderness Preservation System hearing, 1964

Howard Zahniser gave substance to the ideals of the wilderness movement and ensured its future by writing the legislation that turned an idea into law. As the primary author of the Wilderness Act, Zahniser went beyond the constraints of formal bureaucratic language to instill within the Act some of the inspiration of wilderness. Between 1956 and 1964, Zahniser wrote 66 drafts of the bill and steered it through 18 hearings. Not only was Zahniser the primary author, he was the lead proponent. His earnest passion and ardent ideals carried the legislation through many roadblocks and compromises. He never gave up.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1906, Zahniser enjoyed exploring the outdoor areas around the Allegheny River in his youth. His talents in writing, editing, and debating during college, combined with his interest in the outdoors, led him to work for the Bureau of Biological Survey (which later became the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) as an editor, writer, and researcher. The people he worked with through the Survey, such as Olaus Murie, inspired a deepening interest in conservation and wilderness preservation. In 1945, Zahniser went to work full time for the Wilderness Society as executive secretary. In this capacity, he led the Wilderness Society through several campaigns, increasing public and political awareness of wilderness preservation issues. With the momentum built from the successful opposition to a proposed dam in Dinosaur National Monument in the early 1950s, Zahniser led the way to compose and secure passage of a bill to assure protection for wilderness on federal public lands. Zahniser devoted most of his energy during the last nine years of his life to actualize the vision of a National Wilderness Preservation System protected by law.

Although he died in his sleep a few months before President Lyndon Johnson signed the Wilderness Act, Howard Zahniser’s tireless efforts inspire each generation to take up the challenge of wilderness preservation. He lived his life as an example of his words: “It is a bold thing for a human being who lives on the earth but a few score years at the most to presume upon the Eternal and covet perpetuity for any of his undertakings Yet we who concern ourselves with wilderness preservation are compelled to assume this boldness and with the courage of this peculiar undertaking of ours so to order our enterprise as to direct our efforts toward the perpetual” (Howard Zahniser, “Wilderness Forever,” 1969)

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It is a bold thing for a human being who lives on the earth but a few score years at the most to presume upon the Eternal and covet perpetuity for any of his undertakings.

Yet we who concern ourselves with wilderness preservation are compelled to assume this boldness and with the courage of this peculiar undertaking of ours so to order our enterprise as to direct our efforts toward the perpetual—to project into the eternity of the future some of that precious unspoiled ecological inheritance that has come to us out of the eternity of the past.

This is a requisite of our undertaking, and there is yet another of primary importance also:

We must deal with actual areas. Only as we preserve areas of wilderness does there exist in reality the basis for a vital interest in all the many aspects of wilderness that give it the meanings we have been discussing, not only in our recreation but also in our science, literature, art, entertainment—our whole culture, our way of living.

We who are concerned with wilderness preservation must accordingly have these two clear purposes: We must relate all our effective concerns and efforts to the preservation of actual areas, and we must work for their preservation in perpetuity.

When we address ourselves to wilderness preservation with such a purpose we are dealing with those still remaining areas of the earth where the landscape is not dominated by man and his works, areas where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a member of the natural community, a wanderer who visits but does not remain, whose travels leave only trails.

These are the areas that still retain their primeval environment and influence, that remain free from routes that can be used for mechanized transportation, where the freedom of the wilderness still lives on unfettered by the restrictions of the urban industrial life to which mankind has become increasingly confined, primeval areas where a human being can still face natural conditions directly without the mediating conveniences and instruments of domination fashioned in his inventive and technological civilization.

These are the areas that are still as God has been making them without man's aid, but for the protection of which the Almighty now seems to be relying on this His remarkable creature, man—this free-willed, so often untractable participant in the eternal purposes of the whole boundless universe.

At the very beginning of these biennial meetings, at the world's first wilderness conference, we did indeed recognize that protecting areas is only part of our concern.

We saw that safeguarding wilderness involves the wildness of ourselves and of other visitors to the wilderness, for we all have an inborn tendency to make over wilderness rather than to adapt ourselves to it.

We emphasized accordingly that in back country designated as wilderness our concern should always be with the preservation of the wilderness conditions. It is more important, we saw, to safeguard the authenticity of our experience than to make it of long duration or to provide it for large numbers at any given time.

We wished then, as we wish now, of course, to have as many as possible share the wilderness experience—but the wilderness must be wild when we get there, and we want to experience it as wilderness.

In our second wilderness conference we discussed more specifically our deep dependence on the wilderness. We saw ourselves as indeed a part of the wildness of the universe. That is our nature. Our noblest, happiest character develops with the influence of wilderness. Away from it we tend to degenerate into the squalor of slums or the frustration of clinical couches. With the wilderness we are at home.

Some of us think we see this so clearly that for ourselves, for our children, our continuing posterity, and our fellow man we covet with a consuming intensity the fullness of the human development that keeps its contact with wildness. Out of the wilderness has come the

substance of our culture, and with a living wilderness—it is our faith—we shall have also a vibrant, vital culture, and enduring civilization of healthful happy people who like Antaeus perpetually renew themselves in contact with the earth.

We not only value the wilderness because of its own superlative values but because our experience in the wilderness meets fundamental human needs. These needs are not only recreational and spiritual, but also educational and scientific, not only personal but cultural. They are profound. For the wilderness is essential to us, as human beings, for a true understanding of ourselves, our culture, our own natures, our place in all nature.

At the second wilderness conference we sensed clearly that our only hope to avert the loss of the wilderness we cherish is in our deliberate effort to preserve it. The ramifications of our developing mechanical enterprises, our population growth, our whole civilization, are such that only those areas which are set aside for preservation will persist as wilderness.

We saw that we must do two things. We must see that an adequate system of wilderness areas is designated for preservation, and then we must allow nothing to alter the wilderness character of the preserves.

Then came the challenge of the Echo Park controversy, the test whether any designation can long endure. We passed that test. The third conference theme (as Charlott Mauk—the heroine of all these early conferences—entitled its summary) was “Working to Keep What We Have.” By the time of the fourth conference, in 1955 when we moved across the Bay from Berkeley to this metropolis, San Francisco, we were again moving forward toward a clear policy of wilderness protection with a strong legislative program to implement it. Two years later we were able to see even more clearly the nature of our undertaking, for in the interval between the fourth and fifth conferences national wilderness legislation had actually become a proposal in congress.

Many new-found professed friends, as well as familiar opponents - who were converts in testimony, at least, to an increasingly popular idea - brought to us the advantage of sharp scrutiny of all our details. The yes-but wing of the movement began to mobilize and our understanding of difficulties became clearer.

One of the most startling realizations four years ago was the almost sudden awareness that already there are no areas available for preservation as wilderness which are not already devoted to some other purpose. In other words, not only is it expedient to join wilderness preservation to other purposes, compatible purposes of course; it is actually necessary. This realization gives an urgency and a self-awareness in our efforts to establish policies and programs. It does not discourage us. It informs us. The wilderness is still a part of our heritage. In national parks and monuments, national forests, and wildlife refuges, it not only still lives, but exists within federally owned lands where the nation, if it wills, can preserve and use it indefinitely, simply by recognizing that the wilderness character can be preserved while the areas also serve their other purposes as park, forest, or refuge.

Our opportunity to establish thus an enduring policy and program for the preservation of wilderness is one of the superlatively great opportunities of our history. We are its custodians who have in part inherited, in part created, a chance to fashion in the midst of a highly organized, urbanized, mechanized culture enduring policies and effective programs for preserving wilderness. If our opportunity is lost the ultimate loss will be wilderness itself. The issue is not whether we shall have parks or wildlife refuges or outdoor recreation areas in forests and parks. The question is will there live on in any of these areas what we know as wilderness.

We have seen and are seeing difficulties, distractions, even temptations of our own. Policies and programs that endure are opposed by those who wish to exploit commodities in wilderness or see wilderness preserved only tentatively, merely until they have a chance to exploit or develop; thus the exploiters' fear of perpetual protection emphasizes the need for it.

Recreationists looking for areas to serve their good purposes see unspoiled areas of wilderness as invitations for parkways, cabin colonies, picnic grounds, and other conveniences that enhance the landscape for many but destroy wilderness for everybody.

Confronted with such opposition, we ourselves find patience and persistence less interesting than the newness of other good outdoor programs. In the wilderness we are tempted to rationalize airplanes, justify administrative, mechanized equipment, tolerate machinery that might save forage by replacing pack animals, or construe wilderness in a more convenient way for ourselves.

Our difficulties, our distractions, our temptations diminish and jeopardize our unique perishable opportunity.

By not acting promptly and effectively, by modifying our effort for some more practical or more exciting reason, by unwillingness to devote all our resources as needed to the effort that is basic to all our future as wilderness preservers, we are running the risk of sacrificing the basis in reality for all our interest in wilderness.

It is a sacrifice that would take from us the scientific values of wilderness, also the areas of reference which give meaning to the photographs, the motion pictures, paintings, and literature that can inform and inspire us so long as we continue to maintain their basis in reality in the wilderness itself.

The frontier values of the picnic grounds and campsites at the end of the road would perish, too, and the wilderness meaning of the prospect from many miles of our best roadsides.

We would gain a whole world of well-developed outdoor recreation and lose our sole purpose as wilderness preservers.

Toward national forests where "multiple use" may everywhere embrace the uses that sacrifice wilderness; toward national parks where even the back country will include the roads and accommodations that introduce more and more people to less and less wilderness—toward a beautiful, lovely outdoors where any of us would gladly live on century after century if we could, a marvelous land, but without wilderness—toward such a destiny we are surely headed if we hesitate and turn aside from the only way that we have yet found toward enduring policies and programs for wilderness preservation.

The only way is through the establishment of a policy and program by the nation regarding lands that belong to the public under which wilderness areas shall be designated and protected as such. A basic step is the enactment of Congressional legislation.

It is to this end we have pending the Wilderness Bill.

As conservation-minded citizens, we have a deep interest in our national wilderness heritage. As citizens we share also a responsibility for observing as well as using our democratic processes. We are compelled both by our requirements and our obligations to respect those who may emphasize other aspects of the public interest or indeed their own interests.

Enactment of legislation by the Congress of the United States to establish an enduring wilderness preservation policy and program is as great an undertaking in its difficulties of realization as it is in its promise of a future for wilderness.

Yet if we are to anticipate a wilderness-forever future through a national sanction we must in this country take this difficult first step.

It is a step that is so difficult not because it goes so far but because it must be taken by so many. A whole nation steps forward with purpose in the enactment of such legislation, and it marches only when so many are ready to go that the others must move too. Nor in our great government do we disregard the reluctant ones. Rather, we persuade, we confer, we try to understand, we cooperate with; only ultimately do we compel.

We are now in the midst of these democratic processes as directed toward the establishment of wilderness preservation on an enduring basis.

There is nothing so important to us in our wilderness undertaking as the favorable working out of these processes.

The Congress in Washington cannot, however, be our sole concern - not even temporarily. Nor are the courses of action in Congress determined entirely in Washington D.C. Throughout the land we have also immediate and urgent concerns, and throughout the land are the citizens to whom the legislators in Washington are responsible.

In working toward the adoption of this basic policy and program by congress—the body charged by our Constitution with the responsibility for the land where our wilderness exists—we are compelled not only by the exigencies of events and the interest of people to deal with far-flung problems throughout the land. We also are under the compulsion of recognizing that legislators are representatives of the people. If we are to gain the understanding and support of legislators—of the Congress—we must have the understanding and support of the people.

We must go out from our conferences on wilderness to work with our people on wilderness—to inform them through the press, television, through all our media of publicity, and to help them organize in such a way as to make their informed purposes effective.

The question is not one of dealing or not dealing with all our various and far-flung problems. It is a question of how we shall deal with them in our development of an enduring program.

It is of great importance to enlist the civic leaders of our communities in the study of problems relating to wilderness preservation. In every community there are among the local people, businessmen, teachers, clergymen, laborers, farmers, and the many other groups, those who will become effectively interested in wilderness if we can only help them get started.

This is a leadership task that involves us in showing people how to provide a positive influence under the prerogatives of our democratic system.

In brief we need to practice the art of helping others work effectively in fighting for the things in which we believe.

Nor have we exhausted our educational possibilities when we have adapted our wilderness information activities to all the common media of information and means for organizational effectiveness. We need also to entertain in our own imagination every new stimulus of the public mind that we perceive.

The pioneer spirit that stirs in youth is the spirit of the wilderness. Through wilderness experience it can be reborn. We can stir again the youthful energy which has made America strong. We can show that there are yet new frontiers, including our own frontier in fashioning a wilderness program that will endure.

Primeval wilderness, once gone, is gone forever; but it can be preserved forever. The vision of generation after generation, through an enduring future perpetuating a soundly established human purpose, is as glorious as a man's view of sons and daughters when he himself senses the period of his own time and cherishes more and more the Eternal.

The practical program for wilderness preservation, even in its discussion, leads us thus into the inspiring contemplation of something that endures. That is the nature of wilderness and we can hardly fail to realize it. What we must also recognize is that there is still the drive of the self-interest that exploits the wilderness for profit. There still are mining and lumbering interests who seek to confound, frustrate, and defeat every effort to secure wilderness as wilderness. There still are hazards in various enterprises that would continually modify wilderness rather than limit or regulate their own projects. We must use our inspirations to deal patiently, persistently, but practically with these contending forces.

Our political realities are such that we must continue, in our role as citizens, to strive to see the nation of which we are citizens espouse this cause to which we have become devoted. In this effort we are compelled to recognize that we must have the concurrence of many who have not yet or have not long shared our purposes. We must recognize that wilderness as a resource of the people has not been assured perpetuity until those among the people who would and could destroy it have been enlisted in or reconciled to its preservation. We must continue to work for the passage of the basic legislation that is the first step in whatever we can accomplish, and as it is enacted we must promptly mobilize for the ten or fifteen year program that it will inaugurate. There must not be any hesitancy in this, our immediate course of action.

If some of us may indeed become wearied physically, and profoundly, in the years through which frustrations continue—

Who are only undefeated

Because we have gone on trying—

we should never lose heart. We are engaged in an effort that may well be expected to continue until its right consummation, by our successors if need be. Working to preserve in perpetuity is a great inspiration. We are not fighting a rearguard action, we are facing a frontier. We are not slowing down a force that inevitably will destroy all the wilderness there is. We are generating another force, never to be wholly spent, that, renewed generation after generation, will be always effective in preserving wilderness. We are not fighting progress. We are making it.

We are not dealing with a vanishing wilderness. We are working for a wilderness forever.

“The Need for Wilderness Areas,” *The Living Wilderness*, Number 59, winter-spring, 1956-57, pp. 58-43, Howard Zahniser.

In addition to our needs for urban and suburban parks and open spaces, in addition to our need for a countryside of rural loveliness, a landscape of beauty for our living and *in addition* to the needs for parkways and parks and well developed areas for all kinds of outdoor recreation, there is in our planning a need also to secure the preservation of some areas that are so managed as to be left unmanaged—areas that are undeveloped by man's mechanical tools and in every way unmodified by his civilization.

These are the areas of wilderness that still live on in our national parks, national forests, state parks and forests, and indeed various other categories of land likewise.

These are areas with values that are in jeopardy not only from exploitation for commodity purposes and from appropriation for engineering uses. Their peculiar values are also in danger from development for recreation, even from efforts to protect and manage them as wilderness.

There is a great need that resides in the desires of so many people for wilderness experiences, a need that should certainly be met. There is likewise a practical need for realizing our ideal of preserving for everyone the privilege of choosing to enjoy the wilderness if he or she so wishes.

There is another practical or immediate need in our compulsion to save from destruction whatever is *best*. Some of our strongest determination to preserve wilderness arises from this motive.

Robert Marshall, whose memory I honor with admiration and deep gratitude, conveys such an appreciation of the wilderness *as a superlative* in a short essay found among his papers by his brother George Marshall and published posthumously as the editorial in the Summer 1954 issue of *The Living Wilderness*. Essaying a demonstration of “certain distinctive values” that come to a person with a return for a time to the primitive life of the wilderness, he places before us authoritatively the benefits of wilderness and suggests the need for preserving it as something superlative. Note the variety of superlatives in these paragraphs—“best,” “ideal,” “perfect,” “unique,” “most perfect.” He says:

The wilderness furnishes the best environment which remains in the country for physical adventure. It is difficult to overestimate the importance adventure assumes in the longings of innumerable vigorous people. Lack of opportunity to satisfy such longings undoubtedly is responsible for much unhappiness, for a considerable portion of the crime which is so often committed as a means of self expression, and, if we are to believe William James and Bertrand Russell, even for war.

A wilderness journey provides the ideal conditions for developing physical hardiness. In the wilderness a person cannot buy transportation or services. He must provide them for himself. He cannot find machinery to relieve him of the need for expending his own strength and energy. If he gets into trouble he must get himself out of it or face the consequences.

The wilderness also furnishes the perfect environment for peacefulness and relaxation. This is of no consequence in an environment which has been developing through an unbroken chain of natural sequences for millions of years. In the true wilderness there are no jarring notes, no discordant clashes with one’s instinctive sense of what is fitting and proper.

From an esthetic standpoint the wilderness is unique because in it alone immensity is a major quality of the beauty which one enjoys. The values which one gets in a view from some lofty mountain top cannot be comprehended at all if one tries to reduce them to color or form or pattern.

All these esthetic values are present, but they are blended with the dominant value of being a part of an immensity so great that the human being who looks upon it vanishes into utter insignificance.

The wilderness is also unique esthetically in that it stimulates not just the sense of sight, as does art, or the sense of sound, as does music, but all of the senses which man has. The traveler wandering at evening to the shore of some wilderness lakelet senses through his sight the pink sunset sky and the delightful pattern which the deep bay makes among the spruce trees which rise from its shores; senses through his hearing the lapping of the water against the rocky shore and the evening song of the thrush; senses through his smell the scent of balsam and the marsh flowers at the water’s edge; senses through his touch the gentle wind which blows on his forehead and the softness of the sphagnum beneath his feet. The wilderness is all of these senses harmonized with immensity into a form of beauty which to many human beings is the most perfect experience of the earth.

Who that can see clearly these superlative values of the wilderness through the perceptions and interpretations of Robert Marshall can fail to sense a need for preserving wilderness areas?

Who in a democratic government that seeks to serve the public interest even for the sake of minorities would wish to lose an opportunity to realize a policy for wilderness preservation?

Who that looks on into the future with a concern for such values would not wish to insure for posterity the freedom to choose the privilege of knowing the unspoiled wilderness?

But are these superlative values essential?

Is the exquisite also a requisite?

I think it is.

I believe that at least in the present phase of our civilization we have a profound, a fundamental need for areas of wilderness—a need that is not only recreational and spiritual but also educational and scientific, and withal essential to a true understanding of ourselves, our culture, our own natures, and our place in all nature.

This need is for areas of the earth within which we stand without our mechanisms that make us immediate masters over our environment—areas of wild nature in which we sense ourselves to be, what in fact I believe we are, dependant members of an interdependent community of living creatures that together derive their existence from the sun.

By very definition this wilderness is a need. The idea of wilderness as an area without man's influence is man's own concept. Its values are human values. Its preservation is a purpose that arises out of man's own sense of his fundamental needs.

Wilderness to most of us is vacation country, thought about for the most part in connection with occasional good-time escapes from a civilized life which somehow or other seems to be "reality." It is usually only after reflection that one perceives the true reality in the wilderness.

It is, of course, not surprising that recreational values are generally understood as representing the dominant importance of wilderness in our modern civilization. Only in a society that produces the erosion of human beings, the wearing away of soul and body and spirit that is so familiar in our modern circumstances, does the concept of recreation appear.

The wilderness represents the antithesis of all that produces these conditions which recreation remedies. It not only provides the kind of recreation most needed by the increasingly large number who seek wilderness, but it also affords the background for the kind of outdoor recreation for which conveniences and accommodations are provided—the frontier where those who do not wish to experience the rigors of wilderness living and travel may still know in some degree the tonic benefits of its wildness.

Recreational values of the wilderness are thus not only intrinsic but also pervasive throughout the outdoor recreation program of a society with the tastes and resources of the United States. Wilderness preservation is a part therefore of a comprehensive recreational program—a very important part of such a program's provision for outdoor recreation—and it is the ultimate resource for that phase of outdoor recreation that ministers to the individual as such.

But wilderness vacations have overtones that make them more than narrowly recreational. They are more likely to be joyous than merry, more refreshing than exciting, more engrossing than diverting. Their rewards are satisfactions. There is likely to be seriousness about wilderness recreation and an earnestness among those who seek it. So philosophers of education who describe their goals in such terms as "life adjustment" and "personality development" may find in the wilderness a most valuable resource, and recreational values in such a context become profoundly educational.

Deeper and broader than the recreational value of wilderness, although indeed encompassing it, is the importance that relates it to our essential being, indicating that the understandings which come in its surroundings are those of true reality. Our lives seem so derivative from the wilderness, we ourselves seem so dependant on a renewal of our inspiration from these wild sources, that I wonder sometimes if we could long survive a final destruction of all wilderness. Are we not truly and in reality *human*, essentially, as spiritual creatures nurtured and sustained—directly or indirectly—by a wildness that must always be renewed from a living wilderness?

Is it not with some such understanding as this that we realize the essential importance of our wilderness areas?

Is it not thus that we can explain the fact that a wilderness vacation is remembered as more than sport, more than fun, more than simple recreation?

Are not these the understandings which give such profound significance to the longer sojourns that a civilized man or woman occasionally spends in a return to the wilderness—gaining experiences that so often prove interesting to so many of us?

It is characteristic of wilderness to impress its visitors with their relationship to other forms of life, and to afford those who linger an intimation of the interdependence of all life. In the wilderness it is thus possible to sense most keenly our human membership in the whole community of life on the Earth. And in this possibility is perhaps one explanation for our modern deep-seated need for wilderness.

Because we are so well able to do things, we forget that we can do them only because something else is done. We forget that we can continue only as long as other men, other animals, and other forms of life also keep on doing things. We forget that the real source of all our life is not in ourselves, not even in the Earth itself, but more than 90 million miles away, in the Sun. And not one of us is able alone to live on this great source. We live only as members of a community.

If for a time some of us might seem to do well at the tragic expense of other life in this community, we can be sure that it would likewise be at the expense of our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren through the generations that might live. For we know that we can live on in our descendants only if our Earth community lives on with them. We not only exist but we are immortal on the Earth only as members of a great community.

These are facts and understandings that have been known to us only a comparatively short time—through the observations and studies made by our scientists—and not all of us have appreciated them rightly. It is not long since man thought of himself as the center of the universe, thought even of the Sun—the very source of all our life—as a light by day revolving about the Earth. As our new understanding has come—through science—science also has brought us many other new and wonderful discoveries, and the new knowledge of what we *are* has been overlooked by many of us in our eagerness for the new knowledge of what we can *do*. We have become as proud over what we can *do* as ever our ancestors could have been over themselves as the center of the universe.

We deeply need the humility to know ourselves as the dependant members of a great community of life, and this can indeed be one of the spiritual benefits of a wilderness experience. Without the gadgets, the inventions, the contrivances whereby men have seemed to establish among themselves an independence of nature, without these distractions, to know the wilderness is to know profound humility, to recognize one's littleness, to sense dependence and interdependence, indebtedness, and responsibility.

Perhaps, indeed, this is the *distinctive* ministrations of wilderness to modern man, the characteristic effect of an area which we most deeply need to provide for in our preservation programs.

Thus, the most profound of all wilderness values in our modern world is an educational value.

As the so-called conquest of nature has progressed, men and women—separated by civilization from the life community of their origin—have become less and less aware of their dependence on other forms of life and more and more misled into a sense of self sufficiency and into a disregard of their interdependence with the other forms of life with which they— together—derive their existence from the solar center of the universe.

In the areas of wilderness that are still relatively unmodified by man it is, however, possible for a human being, adult or child, to sense and see his own humble, dependant relationship to all of life.

In these areas, thus, are the opportunities for so important, so neglected a part of our education—the gaining of the true understanding of our past, ourselves and our world which will enable us to enjoy the conveniences and liberties of our urbanized, industrialized, mechanized civilization and yet not sacrifice an awareness of our human existence as spiritual creatures nurtured and sustained by and from the great community of life that comprises the wildness of the universe, of which we ourselves are a part.

Paradoxically, the wilderness which thus teaches modern man his dependence on the whole community of life can also teach him a needed personal independence—an ability to care for himself, to carry his own burdens, to provide his own fuel, prepare his own food, furnish his own shelter, make his own bed, and—perhaps most remarkable of all—transport himself by walking.

In these lessons are further the lessons of history—a stimulus to patriotism of the noblest order—for in the wilderness the land still lives as it was before the pioneers fashioned in and from it the civilization we know and enjoy.

With these lessons come also the understanding that physical, psychic, and spiritual human needs are such that wilderness recreation should always be available and, in fact, should be enjoyed to a much greater extent than it now is.

Thus recreational and educational values of the wilderness merge.

In a culture like that which we call modern we can be sure that it will be increasingly important for students, of the present and of future generations, to know what wilderness has to teach—through their own experiences; through educators who are informed and corrected by wilderness experiences; through photographs, paintings, writings, and other educational and informational materials with a validity insured by a still living wilderness.

So long as wilderness exists in reality, providing actual resorts for human beings, giving a sense of actuality to pictorial and literary representations of the wilderness, and affording the scenes for further research, so long will the safeguards against an urban, industrial, mechanized ignorance of the facts of human life be effective.

There are monumental or historic values of the wilderness also; values which are closely related both to educational and recreational values. The wilderness I once described as “a piece of the long ago that we still have with us.” It is highly prized by many people as such. It perpetuates on our continent not only the scene of the pioneering activities of the first white men in this hemisphere but also a still more ancient scene. The areas preserved are monuments to the pioneers’ conquests, but they also are samples of the natural world without

influences of modern man. They have deep values in the continuing opportunity they afford to relieve the lives of ancestors and thus, with also the anticipation of posterity's similar interest, to participate in the immortality of the generations.

The wilderness has profoundly important scientific values. These are similar to those of historical importance in depending on the preservation of areas as they existed, and exist, without the influence of modern man. These values too have an educational aspect, but their more precisely scientific importance is in relation to research. Their research uses are dual: They afford the scenes for fundamental investigations of the natural world of living creatures unmodified by man; they afford also "check" areas where none of the factors being compared in a particular study (land-use research, for example) have been operative.

The scientific values pertain not only to research and original investigation but also to the study and observation that are essentially educational in their purpose. Wilderness areas, including the smaller natural areas and also the extensive wild regions, should accordingly be preserved for the sake of the field study that they make possible for students in each generation. They serve this purpose for the summer camps of youth organizations, for field stations of college summer-school classes, and also for the more advanced excursions of graduate students.

And Aldo Leopold exclaimed: "As a matter of fact, there is no higher or more exciting sport than that of ecological observation."

So we have various needs for wilderness areas that are all derived from a need to maintain an awareness of our human relationships to all life, the need to guard ourselves against a false sense of our own self sufficiency. We need to draw ourselves constantly toward the center of things and not allow our eccentricities to carry us off on a tangent, toward increasing unhappiness.

We are a part of the wildness of the universe. That is our nature. Our noblest, happiest character develops with the influence of wildness. Away from it we degenerate into the squalor of slums or the frustration of clinical couches. With the wilderness we are at home.

Some of us think we see this so clearly that for ourselves, for our children, our continuing posterity, and our fellow men we covet with a consuming intensity the fulness of the human development that keeps its contact with wildness. Out of the wilderness, we realize, has come the substance of our culture, and with a living wilderness—it is our faith—we shall have also a vibrant vital culture—an enduring civilization of healthful, happy people who, like Antaeus, perpetually renew themselves in contact with the earth.

This is not a disparagement of our civilization—no disparagement at all—but rather an admiration of it to the point of perpetuating it. We like the beef from the cattle grazed on the public domain. We relish the vegetables from the lands irrigated by virtue of the Bureau of Reclamation. We carry in our packs aluminum manufactured with the help of hydroelectric power from great reservoirs. We motor happily on paved highways to the approaches of our wilderness. We journey in streamlined trains and in transcontinental airplanes to conferences on wilderness preservation. We nourish and refresh our minds from books manufactured out of the pulp of our forests. We enjoy the convenience and comfort of our way of living—urban, village, and rural. And we want this civilization to endure and to be enjoyed on and on by healthy, happy citizens.

It is this civilization, this culture, this way of living that will be sacrificed if our wilderness is lost. *What sacrifice!*

Our only hope to avert this loss is in our deliberate effort to preserve the wilderness we have. The ramifications of our developing mechanical enterprises are such that only those areas which are set aside for preservation will persist as wilderness.

It behooves us then to do two things: First we must see that an adequate system of wilderness areas is designed for preservation, and then we must allow nothing to alter the wilderness character of the preserves.

We have made an excellent start on such a program. Our obligation now—to those who have been our pioneers and to those of the future, as well as to our own generation—is to see that this program is not undone but perfected.

In our marvelous National Park System; in the wilderness, wild, primitive, and roadless areas of our national forests; on extensive tracts of Indian reservations; in certain units of the national wildlife refuge system, and in state parks, and some others too, we have areas that have either been set aside as wilderness or are protected in a way that safeguards wilderness.

The process of designation of areas of wilderness for preservation, however, is not complete as yet. There are still some to be added—especially grassland, seashore, and desert. There is no doubt, so far as I know, about the correctness of the designation of any of the areas now being preserved. There are, I understand, some boundary adjustments that need to be made for certain areas that were established without opportunity for adequate care as to exact boundaries. There are zoning questions in some of our parks. There are some additions that can be made to established areas. There are private holdings within these public areas that should be acquired.

These aspects of the perfection of the designations should be cared for in a persisting program. And the other potential units in this system of wilderness should be sought out as soon as possible.

For these areas of wilderness we should obtain the maximum possible degree of security. We need Congressional action, to provide for their preservation as wilderness, we should move forward as steadily as we can toward this action.

[Here followed the outline of a proposed bill, which with the modifications of many suggestions and criticisms and further consideration, has been realized in the Wilderness Bill.]

Conservation is both practical and idealistic, as is well demonstrated in our concern with wilderness preservation.

It is good and sound to realize that in preserving areas of wilderness we are recognizing our own true human interest. It seems good, ethical, to consider ourselves as members of a community of life that embraces the earth – and to see our own welfare as arising from the prosperity of the community.

Yet there may be a danger in too conscious, too deliberate, too intent an effort to see all in terms of our own welfare. Jesus suggested that self-seeking is not the way to self-realization; not deliberately but through indirection human beings realize their best welfare, by losing sight of themselves.

It is a great satisfaction to be able to demonstrate to another that an unspoiled wilderness is important because it serves a man's need for "escape," but going to the wilderness to escape from something is no certain way of actually being in wilderness at all. The only way to escape from one's self in wilderness is to lose one's self there. More realistically, the true wilderness experience is one, not of escaping, but of finding one's self by seeking the wilderness.

The sum of this moralizing may be in forsaking human arrogance and courting humility in a respect for the community and with regard for the environment.

The central human importance of such experience, I believe, constitutes profound evidence of need for wilderness areas.

An understanding of these fundamental needs, as well as the so-called more practical needs to meet recreational demands of people for wilderness experience – this understanding should inspire us anew to work for the perfection of a national program for wilderness preservation – a program to serve not only our own human needs but also those of the generations to follow.

Influential Wilderness Thinkers, Leaders, and Advocates

Edward Abbey (1927-1989) Abbey's writings, such as his books *Desert Solitaire* and *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, express his passion for wild undeveloped lands, especially in the desert Southwest. Though not directly involved in the preservation of federal wilderness areas, Abbey raised public awareness about the power and significance of wild lands.

Ansel Adams (1902-1984) Through his photographs, Adams conveyed to the world his passion for wild lands. Adams spent 37 years on the board of the Sierra Club, during which time he raised his voice loudly and often for wilderness preservation. "Wilderness is not only a condition of nature, but a state of mind and mood and heart."

Wendell Berry (1934-) An author of numerous books of essays, novels and poetry, Berry often reflects upon human relationship with place. His own place is his Kentucky farm, where Berry focuses time, energy and thought on sustainable living. Much of his writing delves into the human connection to wilderness.

Stewart Brandborg (1927-) Raised in the mountains of Montana, Brandborg was on the front line with Howard Zahniser in the late 50s and early 60s working for passage of the Wilderness Act. From 1964 to 1976, he served as executive director of the Wilderness Society, which included the time of negotiations for the Alaska National Interest Lands Claim Act of 1980.

Harvey Broome (1902-1968) One of the eight organizers of The Wilderness Society in 1935, Broome worked tirelessly on behalf of wilderness preservation. His eloquent wilderness writings were inspired by the Great Smoky Mountains, which he spent much of his life exploring.

David Brower (1912-2000) As the first executive director of the Sierra Club (1952-1969), Brower filled a leadership role for many conservation issues, including the opposition of a dam in Dinosaur National Monument in the early 1950s and the campaign for the Wilderness Act in the 1960s.

Rachel Carson (1907-1964) During her time as a biologist and editor for the federal government (after being the first woman to take and pass the civil service test), Carson wrote several books about oceans and marine life. Success in her publications let her retire to write full time. Because of the public and political reverberations from her book *Silent Spring*, Carson has been credited with revolutionizing the modern environmental movement.

Senator Frank Church (1924-1984) U.S. Senator from Idaho from 1957 to 1981, Senator Church was the Wilderness Bill's sponsor in the Senate. In Congress, Senator Church spoke to define the meaning and significance of wilderness, and through his words, the intent of the Wilderness Act has been clarified. After passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, Senator Church was involved in legislation designating wilderness areas across the United States, including the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act in 1975.

Ernie Dickerman (1910-1998) Dickerman has been called the "Grandfather of Eastern Wilderness" because of his tireless efforts in local communities and in Washington, D.C., to promote the opportunity of designating wilderness areas in the Appalachians through the Wilderness Act. At home in Tennessee near the Great Smoky Mountains, and later in life in the mountains of western Virginia, Dickerman was a charter member of the Wilderness Society in 1935, and later was instrumental in forming the Virginia Wilderness Committee.

William O. Douglas (1898-1980) Douglas was an ardent conservationist during his time as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1939-1975). In 1954 Douglas organized a 189-mile hike along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath to protest a proposed highway in the canal right of way. The highway plans were abandoned. By spending time in Olympic National Park and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Douglas also focused efforts to preserve these areas. During the time of the long legislative struggle to pass the Wilderness Act, Douglas published two books: *My Wilderness: the Pacific West* and *My Wilderness: East to Katahdin*.

Marjorie Stoneman Douglas (1890-1998) Referred to as “the Mother of the Everglades,” Douglas wrote and spoke prolifically and passionately about the value of the wetlands in southern Florida. Her book *A River of Grass* was instrumental in raising public awareness that led to the establishment of Everglades National Park in 1947. The designated wilderness area in Everglades National Park established in 1978 bears her name.

Celia Hunter (1919-2001) A champion for Alaska’s wild lands and wilderness values, Hunter focused much of her advocacy energy in the Pacific Northwest. Hunter arrived in Alaska as a military pilot in the 1940s and decided to stay. There she initiated and maintained efforts for wilderness legislation, in particular, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. In the late 1970s Hunter took on a national role as executive director of the Wilderness Society.

Benton MacKaye (1879-1975) A passionate spokesperson against the uncontrolled urbanization of America, MacKaye envisioned a wilderness pathway in the eastern U.S. to which city-bound Americans could escape. This vision is actualized today as The Appalachian Trail. MacKaye’s idea of a network of wild lands contributed to the concept of a national wilderness preservation system. MacKaye was one of the eight founders of The Wilderness Society.

John Muir (1838-1914) Muir is a legendary figure for wilderness advocates because of his undaunted and adventurous outdoor spirit. Even though Muir lived before organized efforts for a legislated National Wilderness Preservation System, his own advocacy for wild lands laid the groundwork for public support for future wilderness legislation. Many of his writings speak eloquently of the necessity of wilderness areas. Congress designated the John Muir Wilderness Area as part of the Wilderness Act; it now has a total of 580,293 acres.

Ernest Oberholtzer (1884-1977) A defender of the northern Minnesota wild lands, Ober (as he was called by friends) worked diligently to secure legislation that would protect wilderness areas. Ober was one of the eight founders of The Wilderness Society. His visionary work and tireless advocacy led to the preservation of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park in Minnesota and Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario.

Wallace Stegner (1909-1993) A novelist, teacher, and conservationist, Stegner wrote extensively about the environment. Focusing much of his writing on the environmental complexities of the American West, Stegner also actively campaigned in support of the Wilderness Act. His letter to a resource manager in the Kennedy administration, now referred to as the “Wilderness Letter,” makes many clear statements about the need for preserved wilderness areas. “We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be . . . a part of the geography of hope.” (In *The Sound of Mountain Water*, 1969.)

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) Known for his books *Walden*, *The Maine Woods*, and others, Thoreau promoted preserving natural areas from society’s industrialization and so-called development. His time was spent exploring and writing about New England. A quote from his essay “Walking” (originally stated in a speech at the Concord Lyceum, April 23, 1851) is often misread and misinterpreted: “In wildness is the preservation of the World.” “Wildness” in this passage is a concept and state of being aligned more with wilderness character than a designated place.

Stewart Lee Udall (1920-) During Udall's time as Secretary of the Interior, several major conservation laws were passed, including the Wilderness Act, the Endangered Species Preservation Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and the National Trails System Act. Udall was influential in the establishment of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, which includes the first Department of the Interior designated wilderness area. In his work of environmental philosophy titled, *The Quiet Crisis*, Udall pressed for preservation of public lands for future generations and called for a rethinking of "land attitudes."

Robert Sterling Yard (1861-1945) Yard is intimately associated with the beginnings of the National Park Service and the organization of the National Parks Association (now NPCA) in 1919. At the age of 76, Yard was one of the founders of The Wilderness Society. He served as the Wilderness Society's first president until his death in 1945.

